

Aufderheide
at the Moscow
Film Festival

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WITHDRAWAL SYMPTOMS

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The Big Times

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Smeal picks new president in NOW convention infighting



Molly Yard, new president of NOW

By Jo Freeman

PHILADELPHIA

Ellie Smeal, president of the National Organization for Women (NOW), retained her iron-fisted control of the country's largest feminist organization as she prepared to leave office after NOW's national convention in Philadelphia on July 17-19. For the second time Smeal selected her successor to the presidency as well as the entire slate of officers for the next few years. The new president is Molly Yard, political director of NOW, who has been Smeal's right hand for almost 10 years. Like Smeal, Yard comes from Pennsylvania, where she was involved in civil rights and union activities for many years before

joining NOW in 1974. As Smeal's surrogate, Yard will likely continue her policies.

Smeal was expected to run for re-election, but only two weeks before the convention she sent a letter to all registered delegates announcing her intention to form "a Feminist Institute focusing on politics and economics" after the 1988 elections. She urged support of the United Feminist Action Campaign (UFAC) team. In addition to Yard, the slate included Sheri O'Dell of West Virginia, running for re-election as action vice president, Patricia Ireland of Florida as executive vice president and Kim Gandy of Louisiana as secretary.

The Smeal slate was opposed by the Progressive Action Caucus (PAC), headed by Noreen Connell, president of New York State NOW, who joined the feminist movement in 1970. A former New York state assistant commissioner of labor, she organized for the New York Radical Feminists, founded Women Office Workers, coordinated community programs for Planned Parenthood of New York City, and served as president of New York City NOW and chair of the National Women's Political Caucus of New York State. Also on the PAC slate were Merry Demarest of Oregon, Pat Brandt of Hawaii and Patricia Todd of Alabama. There were no other candidates for NOW office this year.

Long-standing conflict: These two slates represent opposing factions that emerged in NOW at its first contested presidential election in 1974, though the seeds of the conflict can be traced to 1970. As Theresa Bergen, former New York State NOW president and a UFAF supporter, explained, "The people are even the same, though the names of the factions and some of the issues have changed over time."

At the 1974 convention heir-apparent Mary Jean Collins-Robson of Chicago was challenged by insurgent Karen DeCrow of Syracuse, who was supported by Ellie Smeal. DeCrow won because the largely unorganized conventioners were antagonistic to traditional political tactics and feared the possibility of control implicit in the existence of an unofficial slate headed by Collins-Robson. However, most on the slate were elected to the national board, causing serious conflicts with President DeCrow and almost splitting NOW. In 1975 at another Philadelphia convention, Smeal organized discontented NOW members into a "majority caucus," re-elected DeCrow and took control of NOW. She became president in 1977 after NOW was reorganized and Smeal has retained control ever since.

Many people give her credit for transforming NOW from an impoverished, amorphous group with a weak national office to the nation's leading feminist organization and a powerful force in American politics. Yet others find her leadership heavy-handed, accusing her of draining resources from the chapters to fund a professional staff that organizes highly publicized, short-term events at the expense of in-depth organizational development and long-term lobbying.

Said Alice Chapman of Connecticut, national treasurer from 1979 to 1985 and now a PAC supporter, "During the ERA campaign, strong leadership was necessary for a single-issue push," but after 1982 it was more important to build the chapters and work on many issues. She said Smeal didn't do this, but her successor did.

Smeal stepped down in 1983 due to a two-term limit on NOW officers. She chose Judy Goldsmith of Wisconsin as her successor and, in a gesture of solidarity, Mary Jean Collins as action vice president. But by the time they ran for re-election in 1985, Smeal and her followers were displeased with the direction Goldsmith and Collins were taking the organization, while Smeal's opponents were pleased with the way they worked with the local chapters. JoAnn Evansgardner, Smeal's mentor, said Goldsmith "worked with everyone, but she...didn't organize actions. She thought that the president of NOW should lobby Congress."

When Goldsmith and Collins ran for re-election in 1985, Smeal challenged them at the head of another slate and defeated them handily in the most bitter election battle

NOW had seen since 1975. This year the wounds were still raw. "Ellie takes no prisoners," said Kelli Conlin, president of New York City NOW. "When you oppose her she cuts you out," an Oregon NOW leader who didn't wish to be identified commented. Neither Goldsmith nor Collins attended this year's convention.

No mandate: Yard won by 940 to 629, but the victory was not as clean a sweep as "the vote of confidence" and "mandate for the direction of this organization" that Smeal claimed in a post-election press conference. Only 1,603 delegates voted and, of the straight-ticket voters, the UFAC slate won by 872 to 426. This two-to-one ratio had been apparent the day before when each side donned campaign indicia, including turquoise T-shirts for UFAC and yellow scarves and balloons for PAC. The colors revealed the outcome. But of the 305 split-ticket voters who were not among the party faithful, Connell won overwhelmingly. Two-thirds voted for her and Brandt, along with O'Dell and Gandy of the UFAC slate. Yard trailed her team.

Despite the loss, Connell and the PAC slate declared their intention to stay active in NOW. But the mutual hostility of both sides was disturbing particularly to first-time delegates. Signs were ripped up and individuals with the wrong colors, or even no colors, were hassled by each side. Lonnie Johns-Brown, NOW's Washington state lobbyist, said, "Compared to 1985, this election was a picnic." But she was concerned that the hostility and partisanship will drive people from NOW. "What keeps the factions alive," she added, "is that the winners are bad winners," and newcomers "don't have patience with winners who carry grudges for years."

Both sides agreed that the factions did not differ on

INSIDE STORY

ideology or goals: both presidential candidates saw the ERA as a priority, both saw preventing Bork's confirmation to the Supreme Court as the most immediate issue, both supported Rep. Pat Schroeder's (D-CO) potential presidential bid. What they disagreed on is why the factions have lasted so long.

Evansgardner said, "They think they can do it better than Ellie and want to take over, but Ellie's the better organizer." She added that the PAC faction is "into coalition politics, but we found that NOW has to go it alone or the feminist agenda will be submerged." Bergen agrees that both sides want power, but "Smeal empowers her people while the PAC people just use theirs."

Lonnie Johns-Brown argues that leadership style is what divides them. "We believe power should come from the bottom up. The opposition has been consolidating power at the top." As an example, she pointed to a series of by-laws amendments that would give more power to the president and the national board at the expense of the other officers and the state organizations. All but a couple passed at the convention, and the rest were tabled when time ran out.

Connell's criticism of Smeal is that she has never worked with the chapter leadership. "If you want to ratify the ERA you have to work through the states. But they give us no resources or information." An example of this was provided by Sarah L. Wohlrabe, Iowa NOW coordinator. In the 1980 presidential election national NOW supported Edward Kennedy in the Iowa precinct caucuses because it didn't think Jimmy Carter had done enough for the ERA. She said the national didn't consult with the local NOW leadership, but sent in a national project team that "ruined [state] NOW's credibility."

Connell worries that in the current national leadership's zeal to support Schroeder, who raised almost \$350,000 in campaign pledges after speaking to the NOW convention, "they'll bring in an amateur strategy" and not effectively use the 300 Iowa NOW members with experience in organizing the Democratic precinct caucuses.

Jo Freeman is a New York-based author and attorney, and has been a NOW member since 1968.

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In an attempt to relandscape, insurance company bulldozers devastated Herbert Jones' foreclosed farmland.

Insurance companies ruin repossessed Iowa farmland

By David Moberg

HAMILTON, MO

WEARING HIS BIG SMITH OVERALLS AND O's Gold seed cap, Herbert Jones surveyed the devastation on the hilly farm he had owned and operated for 39 years. Until the insurance company that held his mortgage foreclosed on his 762 acres in 1985, Jones had carefully adapted to the fragile landscape. There were ponds and terraces to slow the flow of water down the hills, pasture for cattle where the soil was easily eroded and trees clustered over much of the terrain to break the wind, hold the soil and protect birds and wildlife.

Then Mutual Benefit Life Insurance foreclosed and within weeks sent a bulldozer to remake the farm. "They took all the terraces out, pushed stuff into this pond," Jones said, pointing to the damage. "There were natural trees, walnuts that were 150 years old. They pushed all these trees off the high side of the hills, pushed the brush into the ponds, lowered another pond. They took out this good waterway. This hedgerow is gone."

The insurance company's bulldozer operator had tried to convert the patchwork of fields, pasture and woodland, often cut by natural ravines, into something approximating one big, rolling field that would look attractive to outside investors envisioning intensive cultivation of cash crops, like soybeans. As I walked over the land with the 61-year-old Jones, the folly of the attempt was manifest: deep gullies, widespread erosion, an ugly morass of brush, dead trees and fence wire pushed into ponds and Lick Fork Creek. Each year, Jones said, the company had tried to fill in ditches or cover rocky ledges with top soil. Each year, as Jones could have told them, the soil was washed away.

Killing fields: "There's a rock ledge here," he said, pointing. "There were trees. You can't farm that. Better have left the trees alone. They pushed dirt into the ditch. All that good top soil just goes. Then you do it again. What do you do the next time? And what did they

gain clearing those good oak trees off that hill, anyway?" The bulldozer also leveled barns, houses and farm buildings in its rampage across the farm. The tenant farmers subsequently hired to farm the land plowed up and down hills rather than on the contour—thus increasing erosion. For three years they have planted soybeans, not rotating crops to renew the soil, and have done a bad job as well. "They've grown lots of cockleburrs since they took over," Jones said.

The Jones farm may be an extreme case, but it is not unique. Throughout the Midwest there has been a dramatic increase in farmland ownership by insurance companies in recent years, most of it from foreclosure rather than deliberate investment. Family farm advocates fear that whether it is sold or held by the companies, land ownership will be increasingly concentrated in the hands of a few big farmers and outside investors. They also argue that absentee ownership and tenant farming are more likely to lead to land abuse.

Says Mark Schultz, a researcher for the Land Stewardship Project in Minnesota, "The Project recently calculated that 14 major insurance companies now own more than 4.1 million acres of farmland worth about \$2.3 billion—an inventory nearly equal to that held by the two major federal farm lending institutions. The same companies hold an additional 53,333 farm mortgages worth \$10.6 billion.

Some companies like Mutual Benefit Life—which has a small inventory compared to Prudential, Travelers, John Hancock, Metropolitan Life and Aetna—apparently intend to sell their holdings as soon as prices rise and they can find buyers. Others may be seeking a longer-term role. Metropolitan, Prudential, Travelers and Mutual of New York have all recently bought leading farm management companies.

Changing owners: "The insurance companies are going to play an increasingly key role," said David Ostendorf, director of

Prairiefire, the Iowa farm advocacy group. "If current land transfer patterns continue, by 1991 these land management companies will oversee 25 percent of the nation's cropland on behalf of absentee individual, family and corporate owners. Now it's at 16 percent."

The farm credit legislation now in Congress will set up a secondary market in farm mortgages that would be extremely attractive to insurance companies. Critics say any new money for farming generated by such resale of mortgages will go mainly to rich farmers or outside investors.

The *Des Moines Register* recently reported that big investors, ranging from wealthy Japanese to former Democratic Party leader Charles Mannatt, are trying to buy foreclosed Iowa farms. Overwhelmingly buyers now pay mainly cash, according to University of Nebraska economist Bruce Johnson. "Over the course of a number of years we'll see a gradual movement of landholdings away from the operating farmer," he said.

The social effects of land concentration are clear: depopulated countryside, depressed rural communities, greater economic inequity and an end to an old American democratic ideal of the yeoman farmer/craftsman. The ecological cost may be just as great, but is less clearly established.

"It's not infrequent" for insurance companies to destroy the land they take over, said Ron Kroese, director of the Land Stewardship Institute. Kroese acknowledged that "you can't say every time an insurance company takes over things go to hell. But in the long run if we want good stewardship of land we've got to have people with a strong attachment to the land, preferably to own it with a strong family tie to the land."

Lost agri-culture: The drift in ownership is likely to exacerbate the trend to chemically intensive, large-scale agriculture that itself fosters concentrated ownership. "Prior to availability of herbicides, we had to cultivate crops," said Pennsylvania State University agricultural economist J. Patrick Madden. "Then you had to really know your land. It was really skilled work that required a real artisan. One man could handle only so many acres like that without going bonkers. Enter herbicides: you can go like a bat out of hell

and hire somebody who knows nothing about the soil." The result may be momentarily cheaper food but long-term degradation of land, water, wildlife, food and rural life.

But even individual farmers can be rotten conservationists, especially when economically hard-pressed as in recent years. "There's a longstanding debate on whether farmers who rent or own land are better stewards," said Cornell University agricultural economist Charles Geisler. "Some feel strongly renters and others without full equity are not very good stewards. If that's right, we could be moving in the direction of farmers who feel less responsibility for managing resources intergenerationally and raid what they can. But it's less whether you own or rent than whether you're secure. If you're secure, you're less likely to abuse the land." And few farmers recently have been secure.

Herb Jones, winner of a 1964 conservation award, grew up near Hamilton in northwestern Missouri, farming first with his father, then with his children, who won more than 100 livestock awards. John Lee, an adult agricultural teacher, said that Jones was "a tremendous producer and hard worker."

Jones' fall: But in the early '80s he was hit by a triple whammy. Four years of bad weather led to increasing debt. Some land he acquired in the late '70s plummeted in value. Prices for his cattle slumped as the market was glutted by huge tax-loss beef feedlot operations and imported beef, devastating the combination of cattle and crops that make sound ecological sense for farms in his area. Then, Jones charges in a fraud lawsuit, the local bank deceived him, precipitating bankruptcy and foreclosure. Mutual Benefit refused to restructure the debt to permit Jones to continue farming or to rent to him or his son, although one of Jones' daughters bought the homestead and 35 acres.

Jones and even the first tenant warned that the bulldozer attack wouldn't work. But Mutual Benefit Vice President Charles Duesler still insists, "I think our plan was all right, but maybe two or three things in functioning were off." Duesler insists the farm looks bad simply because they are in the middle of the work, although "there were some trees that probably shouldn't have been pushed down."

"Mr. Jones is too impatient," Duesler continued. "He hasn't waited long enough to see what we're doing there."

But when Mutual Benefit applied for federal state and conservation funds recently, some local conservation board members said, "We didn't feel it was proper use of funds to replace conservation practices that had been destroyed and to fix erosion where there had been none before," according to Randy Railsback, director of Project REACH, a farmer assistance group.

Jones' case has been taken up by Railsback, his minister, Rev. Fred Royer, Lee and other farmers, who have organized letter-writing campaigns, publicity and possible financial backing for Jones. "This is a bigger story than just this farm," Railsback said. "There's got to be some accountability by corporations as landowners. Mutual Benefit said, 'It's our land and it's no one else's concern.' It's one thing to take away the farmer and all that knowledge, but when you lose the land, that may be even more irreplaceable." □

Joel Bleifuss

Christie plaintiffs under country arrest

The Costa Rican government is refusing to allow journalists Tony Avirgan and Martha Honey, the two plaintiffs in the Christie Institute suit, to leave the country (see story on page 8). Last Monday Avirgan had planned to fly to Miami to meet with Christie lawyers. But when going through immigration at the San Jose airport his name came up on a computer and he was stopped. In May Avirgan and Honey were framed when they were sent a package from Managua that contained cocaine and a note purportedly written by Tomas Borges, Nicaragua's interior minister, that said, "Sell this for me... The commandantes are very happy with your mission..." (See *In These Times* May 2.) The letter went on to refer to Daniel Ortega, a man named "Pavlov" and Sen. John Kerry (D-MA). For the past year Kerry, chairman of the narcotics and terrorism subcommittee of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, has been probing the contra-drug connection (see story on page 6). No charges have been brought against Avirgan and Honey and Costa Rican officials have assured the two there is nothing to worry about. But since the case is still pending, they will not be allowed to travel until all is settled and that "could be months from now, conceivably years," said Honey in an interview on New York's WBW "Gettysburg" radio program. "We feel we are being held as prisoners in this country," she said. "Obviously what is happening is just another attempt to stop us from working and to strangle us economically and psychologically." She is asking people to send telegrams to Costa Rican President Oscar Arias, San Jose, Costa Rica, or the country's ambassador to the U.S., Ambassador Guido Fernandez at the Costa Rica Embassy, 1825 Connecticut Ave. NW, Suite 211, Washington, DC 20009.

Accounting for the contras

The recently reshuffled contra board of directors has temporarily stabilized. There are six members on this "political directorate" and they have dropped their differences and are now united in their opposition to the Marxist policies of the Sandinistas. All were recently profiled by James LeMoine in the July 19 *New York Times*. What follows is some information that wasn't reported. The most colorful contra board member is a newly appointed Somocista, Aristides Sanchez. A report by the congressional Arms Control and Foreign Policy Caucus describes Sanchez as a "wealthy landowner and close associate of Somoza." Another contra director is a veteran of the board, Alfonso Robelo. He worked closely with Oliver North's bag man Robert Owen. In March 1985 after a conversation with Robelo, Owen wrote North saying that one of the "major things [Robelo] is concerned about is that he has not received his \$30,000 for August." It is unclear if the money was to have come from contra leader Adolfo Calero or North. A seventh member of the contra's political directorate, a Miskito Indian, will be added as soon as the power struggle between three Miskito contra leaders is resolved.

Straight power concepts

"We have about 50 percent of the world's wealth, but only 6.3 percent of its population... in this situation we cannot fail to be the object of envy and resentment... We need not deceive ourselves that we can afford today the luxury of altruism and world-benefaction... We should cease to talk about vague and unreal objectives such as human rights, the raising of the living standards, and democratization. The day is not far off when we are going to have to deal in straight power concepts. The less we are then hampered by idealistic slogans, the better." Words from the cold intellect of an Elliott Abrams? No, this was an internal State Department memorandum written by George Kennan in 1948. And the former ambassador to the Soviet Union was right, the days of dealing in straight power concepts were not far off.

Where the trains run on time

U.S. Ambassador to New Zealand Paul Cleveland said last year, "Sometimes it is more difficult to deal with a messy democracy like New Zealand than with some Asian dictatorships." Like Korea? Where Cleveland spent over a decade before being posted to New Zealand. Or like Indonesia? Where Cleveland served as a foreign service officer in 1965 when a CIA-instigated coup overthrew President Sukarno and put Gen. Suharto in power. In the several years that followed an estimated 500,000 to one million

INS strikes out at political asylum applicants

U.S. Attorney General Edwin Meese's July directive calling for special treatment for Nicaraguans was quickly recognized by a group of Nicaraguan political asylum applicants as political hogwash. And in response to their demand to know exactly how the directive would help them, they received some not-so-special treatment from the U.S. Border Patrol and the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS).

About 50 Nicaraguans awaiting their hearings at the Port Isabel Detention Center, 20 miles from the Texas-Mexico border, began a passive hunger strike at 6 a.m. on July 24 in the yard of the Center, better known as the *corralon*. The INS sent a lawyer to appease the Nicaraguans in the afternoon, but when they refused to leave and were still in the yard at 11 p.m., the INS responded by buzzing the detainees with a helicopter and storming the yard with about 80 Border Patrol officers and INS guards. According to three striking Nicaraguans and one observing Salvadoran, the attackers—some of whom were not in uniform—club-

bed the defenseless Nicaraguans on the arms, legs and bodies. One was hit in the face and the groin. Detainees said later that five Nicaraguans were unaccounted for, presumed hospitalized.

"The helicopter arrived first, to scare us, then the patrol ran at us with clubs, screaming, 'Sit down you faggots,'" Julio Cesar Pamagua Torres told *In These Times*. "We sat down. No one fought back." Pamagua and 16 others identified by the INS as ringleaders were transferred to Starr County Jail in Rio Grande City.

All local press accounts of the incidents—including the Associated Press story—simply reported INS District Director Omer G. Sewell's account, which never mentioned the violence. In fact, Sewell denied to *In These Times* that anyone was hit. "In any situation where you have 50 people refusing to follow instructions, there will be some scuffling," he said. "They were shaking the fence and we became apprehensive that they might bolt on us as a group."

Sewell claims only 35 or 40 patrol officers entered the yard, dressed in helmets and protective vests and carrying batons. He claims and the Nicaraguans deny that the detainees were demanding immediate and unconditional release.

"There's some pretty hardened criminals in the bunch," Sewell said in justifying his decision to send in the patrol.

The violent response is particularly ironic in light of the Meese directive that urges Nicaraguan refugees to seek asylum and authorizes special treatment by INS officials to obtain work permits for them. It also urges Nicaraguans previously denied asylum to re-apply and mandates special INS efforts to educate and encourage Nicaraguans to apply for permanent residency.

If Meese was attempting to appease Nicaraguan refugees, many of whom are sympathetic with the administration's anti-Sandinista stance, he failed in South Texas. And he also failed, at least for now, at what some believe was the real motive for his directive: an attempt to undermine legislation proposed by Rep. Joe Moakley (D-MA) and Sen. Dennis DeConcini (D-AZ) calling for the temporary suspension of deportations of Salvadorans and Nicaraguans. Meese wanted to take the wind out of conservative support for the bill because of the inclusion of Nicaraguans. However, the bill passed the House July 28 and is scheduled for a Senate vote in September.

—Jane Juffer



Nicole Ferentz

Martial law and order: the Reagan-North prescription

Miami Herald reporter Alfonso Chardy reported last month that Lt. Col. Oliver North, while on the National Security Council had worked with the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) on a plan to institute military rule—martial law—in the event of “national opposition to a U.S. military invasion abroad.”

“That’s bullshit,” said Justice Department spokesperson John Russell when asked about the North martial law scheme. “We have the Posse Comitatus Act, part of Title XVIII of the U.S. [Government] Code that bars the military from engaging in law enforcement.”

Unfortunately, there are powerful people in the U.S. military and the administration who don’t seem to think much of those prohibitions. A Pentagon document, titled Department of Defense Directive No. 3025.10, dated July 22, 1981, and currently in effect, states: “In those areas in which martial law has been proclaimed, military resources may be used for local law enforcement. Normally a state of martial law will be proclaimed by the president.

“However, in the absence of such action by the president, a senior military commander may impose martial law in an area of his command where there has been a complete breakdown in the exercise of government functions by local civilian authorities. Military assump-

tion of judicial, law enforcement and administrative functions of local government will be based on necessity that is actual and present, and the performance of these functions will continue only so long as necessity of that extreme nature requires interim military intervention.”

The author of that directive was then Deputy Secretary of Defense Frank C. Carlucci, Reagan’s current National Security Adviser.

The present himself has long had a fascination with martial law. As governor of California, between 1968 and 1972 Reagan ran a series of martial law domestic “war games” under the code name “Operation Cable Splicer I, II and III.” Cable Splicer operations involved the California National Guard, local police departments and elements of the U.S. Sixth Continental Army (according to documents obtained through a 1975 Freedom of Information Act request by reporter Ron Ridenhour).

The man in charge of Cable Splicer military operations was National Guard Col. Louis Giuffrida, the man Reagan in 1981 named director of FEMA, and who Col. North worked with on the martial law project. Directing Cable Splicer was Gov. Reagan’s executive secretary Edwin Meese III. Meese said at the time that the most important factor in implementing martial law was advance intelligence gathering to facilitate the internment of leaders of civil disturbances.

There is no self-destruct clause in the Constitution authorizing its suspension. But constitutional

scholar Derek Bell of Harvard argues that this is small comfort. “The constitutional protections we rely on are only good as long as the factual situation is not dangerous,” he says.

“When the factual situation is perceived to be dangerous, either by the general public or by the people in power, then you could have here the kind of thing we’ve seen happen in the Third World. It happened with [President] Lincoln’s shocking suspension of habeas corpus, it happened with martial law [in Hawaii] after Pearl Harbor, it happened with the internment of Japanese-Americans in World War II.

“The fact is, if you look at the things this government has been doing in Central America—the mining of harbors, the illegal arms shipments to the contras—there is good cause to worry about the possibility of martial law here.”

A staff aide to Rep. Jack Brooks (D-TX) says the Congressman “plans to pursue the martial law story.”

And Rep. Don Edwards (D-CA), chair of the subcommittee on civil liberties and constitutional rights, which is investigating domestic spying, is also interested. Says Edwards, “I’m deeply disturbed by the reports of martial-law planning. We should demand that the whole thing be made public. I had no idea that this kind of thing could go on in this country, but that’s where secret government leads you. It is very ominous.”

—Dave Lindorff

U.S. shirks WHO obligation

When a reporter at a recent Washington, D.C., news conference asked the director-general of the World Health Organization (WHO) where the U.S. stands on meeting its financial obligations to the agency, the WHO director paused a moment and boomed: “It doesn’t stand—it’s lying down.”

Dr. Halfdan Mahler, a Dane who has directed the U.N. agency for the past 14 years, charged that the U.S. by not fulfilling its treaty commitments has paralyzed WHO at a time when it must play a central role in worldwide efforts to control the spread of AIDS.

So far, Mahler said, he has “refused to allow AIDS [programs] to suffer,” but only deep cuts in other WHO programs have made this possible. A nutrition project in Africa and an international plan to control drug abuse are, said Mahler, two casualties of the U.S.-induced budget crunch. Both programs were scrapped because there was no guarantee of funding.

“The other stuff we do [in addition to AIDS work] is also vital,” said a WHO official who declined

to be named. “One million children in Africa die of malaria each year; five million people die from diseases we have the complete capability of preventing through simple immunization. The budget constraints mean we aren’t dealing with these problems.”

The U.S. is on paper the largest contributor to WHO’s two-year \$600 million 1986-87 budget. But the health agency claims that the U.S. has so far delivered only \$7 million of its \$126 million share. A State Department official who declined to be named admitted that the U.S. is “seriously in arrears,” but disputed the WHO figures, saying that the U.S. has contributed approximately \$10 million of a total \$118 million obligation and in October plans to disburse another \$35 million.

But discussions with administration, congressional and WHO representatives suggest that WHO is caught between domestic deficit trouble and the Reagan administration’s contempt for the U.N. The State Department skirts the issue by blaming Congress for not appropriating necessary funds. And congressional and WHO sources accuse the State Department of failing to request and disburse money

for the international agency.

Recognizing perhaps that its position as the world leader in reported AIDS cases means it has the most to gain from AIDS funding, the U.S. has made small, off-budget contributions to WHO-administered AIDS-control programs while it shirks its other commitments to the U.N. agency. Recently the U.S. joined 11 other countries in donating \$38 million for WHO’s AIDS projects. And turning Mahler’s visit to Washington late last June, the U.S. Agency for International Development agreed to contribute an additional \$5 million to WHO-sponsored AIDS research.

These off-budget U.S. contributions have helped bolster spending for AIDS programs, but Mahler ended his Washington tour without any commitment from the U.S. to honor its WHO treaty obligations and make funds available for other health projects.

Before meeting with administration and congressional representatives, Mahler labeled himself a “romantic optimist,” adding that “I believe the U.S. cares about WHO.” But the WHO official accompanying Mahler said the director-general left Washington “deeply depressed.”

—John Schmitt

Indonesians were murdered. The *New York Times* described the bloodbath as “one of the most savage mass slaughters of modern history.” Marshall Green, the U.S. ambassador to Indonesia during the coup, said in 1973 while serving as ambassador to Australia: “In 1964, I remember, Indonesia was poised at the razor’s edge.... What we did we had to do, and you’d better be glad we did, because if we hadn’t Asia would be a different place today.”

Pollyanna’s day after

As we commemorate the 42nd anniversary of the nuclear slaughter at Hiroshima and Nagasaki, we should take note of some good news from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) (see story on page 4). The folks who are planning today for the post-nuclear tomorrow have revised their death figures. According to the Associated Press, FEMA estimates that a nuclear war would turn only 46.3 percent of the U.S. population into corpses. This is down from a previously calculated 64.5 percent. But note that FEMA is talking instant deaths—their revised body count does not include those of you who would die from fire, starvation or radiation poisoning.

Caldicott in the antipodes

Dr. Helen Caldicott, the Australian pediatrician who has been described by Sen. Edward Kennedy as “mother of the nuclear freeze movement,” is spending the year in Australia working to convince her fellow countrymen to follow New Zealand’s anti-nuclear example. According to Jerry Fetherston writing in *Women’s Day*, Caldicott believes that if Australia were to close U.S. bases and ban U.S. nuclear warships, other countries like Spain, Greece, Japan and possibly Britain would follow suit. “The responsibility for keeping the world free of the horror of nuclear war rests with everyone,” she says. “You can’t just sit back and wait for someone else to protest. There isn’t time.”

Vanunu nominated for Nobel Peace Prize

Mordechai Vanunu has been nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize by five Australian senators and four members of the Australian parliament, reports *Israeli Foreign Affairs*. Vanunu, an Israeli nuclear technician, is standing trial in Jerusalem for disclosing details of his country’s secret nuclear weapons facility to the *Sunday Times* of London on Oct. 5, 1986. He is charged with treason and espionage. In their letter to the Nobel Committee the Israeli officials say that Vanunu was “motivated by a great and long-standing desire for world peace.” Three letter-writing campaigns in support of Vanunu are currently underway. Judy Zimmet, a friend of Vanunu, says he has asked her to encourage people to write him (P.O. Box 2495, Jerusalem). The Israeli Committee for an Open Trial for Mordechai Vanunu urges letters be sent to the Israeli Embassy (Ambassador Meir Rosenne, Israeli Embassy, 3514 International Dr., Washington, DC 20008). And in the U.S. the Mordechai Vanunu Defense Committee is asking people to write their senators and representatives.

Toxic racism

Three of the nation’s largest hazardous waste dumps are located near black or Hispanic communities according to a new study by the United Church of Christ. Project director Ben Chavis says the situation “reveals an insidious form of institutionalized racism” that is neither “an accident” nor a “mere random occurrence.” The study found that communities that host one toxic waste landfill or incinerator have, on average, a population that is 24 percent minority. And those cities and towns that have two or more dumps have a minority population of 38 percent.

Coors banned at Red Sox games

Coors will no longer be sold at Fenway Park home of the Boston Red Sox baseball team. The agreement to halt sales came after negotiations between Fenway Park management, union representatives and Boston’s openly gay City Councillor David Scondras. “Boston baseball fans should not be subsidizing a terrorist war in Central America,” said Scondras, referring to Coors’ funding of the contras. “Nor should they help support a family that is dedicated to attacking the rights of gay people, blacks, women and unions.”

By Dennis Bernstein and Robert Knight

Three committees track down smuggled drugs, not smoking gun

WHEN FORMER NATIONAL SECURITY ADVISER Adm. John Poindexter testified on July 16 that the diversion of funds to the contras was all his idea, many Congress members saw this as the climax of the ongoing Iran-contra investigation, establishing what the president knew about this one grim aspect of the scandal. But others on Capitol Hill took this single-minded quest for the "smoking gun" as a signal to step up other investigations into yet more damning allegations about the Reagan administration's contra policy.

Three committees are now examining charges that Lt. Col. Oliver North's secret contra arms network was funded by illegal drug sales arranged and facilitated by the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and contra leaders. Each committee is independently looking into the contra-drug connection, citing different mandates but sharing the same broad scope.

Two of the committees, the Senate Foreign Relations subcommittee on terrorism, narcotics and international operations, chaired by Sen. John Kerry (D-MA), and the House Judiciary subcommittee on crime, chaired by Rep. William Hughes (D-NJ), are conducting quiet yet active investigations, subpoenaing witnesses and taking testimony. The other committee, the House Select Committee on Narcotics Abuse and Control, chaired by Rep. Charles Rangel (D-NY), has been more visible, although arguably more passive as well.

The Rangel committee: The narcotics committee, which was established to coordinate congressional concerns about drugs, has not yet held a formal hearing, cross-examined a witness or issued a subpoena on the contra-drug issue. Sources within the committee attribute its inaction to reasons ranging from insufficient staffing and investigative resources to an unclear statutory mandate.

But some committee members have expressed outright disbelief and lack of interest in investigating a contra-drug connection. "I just don't believe any of it," said committee member Robert K. Dornan (R-CA), a contra aid supporter. "It's pursued by the left-of-center groups, particularly those with a religious orientation toward liberation theology."

Rep. James Traficant (D-OH), another committee member, responded by saying it was ironic that "with an overzealous ambition to help the contras, we'd even turn our backs on this type of nefarious drug dealing."

Both congressmen's comments followed a July 21 informal briefing to committee members by representatives of the Washington-based International Center for Development Policy (ICDP) and the National Security Archive, private groups specializing in the study of international affairs.

"The bottom line is that the information we received will be turned over to the Judiciary Committee as part of their investigation," Rangel said at the press conference after the briefing. He maintained that thus far he had not found "any evidence that would show that the contra leadership were involved in the trafficking of drugs."

Despite committee infighting and claims of lack of money and mandate, the Rangel

committee conducted important preliminary research, submitting to U.S. Customs the names of 38 individuals and companies associated with the contras that may have been connected to drug smuggling.

In a June 23 press release, Rangel said he received a letter from William Rosenblatt, acting Customs commissioner. "Customs reports," said Rangel, "that for 24 of the 38 individuals or companies we asked them to check, there is 'positive' information on the Customs computer indicating previous interest...in these people or companies. This initial check provides information that warrants further investigation about possible

CONGRESS

tie-ins between the contras, the individuals carrying out the contra supply mission and drug smuggling activities." Among the names the committee submitted were John Hull, Mario Calero and Adolfo Calero. It did not reveal which names came back "positive," pending further investigation.

The committee also requested information from the Justice Department's Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA). Initially, the department refused to cooperate with the committee, saying it would not release information to any committee other than the Iran-contra committee. "I am shocked and dismayed that Attorney General Meese would have the DEA gagged," commented Rangel. But after he threatened to hold public hearings to gather the information the committee needed, and intervention by Rep. Lee Hamilton, co-chair of the Iran-contra committee, the DEA agreed to cooperate.

Many close to the committee's drug investigation resent what they consider Rangel's attempt to grab headlines without substance to back him up. He suffered a major setback when his star briefing witness cancelled at the last minute. According to prepared press statements, the committee expected a well-respected journalist to provide it with startling new information. But the journalist's editor prevented him from testifying. An anonymous congressional source, however, described the surprise witness as "a grand-

A journalist had been scheduled to provide the narcotics committee with startling new information, but the journalist's editor prevented him from testifying.

stand play" designed to "get the committee off the hook."

The Kerry committee: On the same day that Poindexter bit the bullet destined for his commander-in-chief, Kerry's Foreign Relations subcommittee was firing a salvo of its own. Kerry opened public hearings by stating that his investigation not only will consider individual charges of contra-drug smuggling, but will also evaluate "broader aspects of drug trafficking as they may or may not have come to affect and impact American foreign policy." If Kerry follows through on this mandate, his panel has the potential to officially document the long-suspected connections between narcotics trafficking, covert actions and U.S. foreign policy.

The Kerry panel summoned convicted drug smuggler George Morales, who testified that four contras and CIA operative John Hull were involved in an arms-for-drugs operation that kept the contras in bullets during the 1984-85 ban on military aid. Morales said contra leaders Adolfo (Popo) Chamorro, Gerardo Duran, Marcos Aguado and Octaviano Cesar participated in the arms-for-drugs operation. He also said Cesar and Aguado, claiming to represent the CIA, approached him after a 1983 drug indictment and promised him "they would take care of the legal problems" in exchange for his help in arming the contras.

In 1984 and '85 Morales directed his fleet of planes and pilots to ferry thousands of tons of weapons to Hull's ranches in Costa Rica, and return to the U.S. with contra-supplied drugs. He sold the drugs in the U.S. to raise cash for more contra weaponry. Morales testified he sometimes helped the contras secure illegal arms.

Another witness, Ramon Milian-Rodriguez, gave closed testimony to the Kerry subcommittee that in 1983, as a money launderer for a major Colombian drug cartel, he passed \$10 million worth of drug money to the contras.

Milian-Rodriguez, who is serving 35 years on drug-related charges, said he passed the money to contra couriers hand-picked by Felix Rodriguez, who oversaw the contra resupply operation at Ilopango, El Salvador, and met several times with Donald Gregg, Vice President George Bush's national security adviser and Felix Rodriguez' old boss from the CIA.

The subcommittee announced after Milian-Rodriguez' testimony that it was issuing subpoenas in connection with charges "that narcotic traffickers have developed a working relationship with officials or political figures in the U.S. and foreign countries and become involved in both sides of the Nicaraguan conflict."

The Hughes committee: Although Hughes' subcommittee on crime is actively questioning witnesses, several sources close to the investigation accuse the chairman of footdragging.

Nevertheless, the committee recently sent several investigators to Costa Rica and Miami to look into allegations that Meese's Justice Department attempted to derail an

early investigation by the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and a Miami U.S. attorney into an illegal contra arms-and-drugs network. "There would appear to be some substance to the allegations," Hughes said during a recent press conference, "that the Justice Department either attempted to slow down or abort one of the ongoing criminal investigations."

The crime subcommittee recently subpoenaed three assistant U.S. attorneys from Miami to testify about how Miami U.S. Attorney Leon Kellner may have sanitized his contra arms and drugs investigation, eliminating any evidence of a White House connection.

Assistant Attorneys Lawrence Sharf and David Leiwant appeared before a closed subcommittee session on July 23. According to an investigator with close ties to the subcommittee, the two were questioned about a May 14, 1986, memo to Kellner from Assistant U.S. Attorney Jeffrey Feldman.

The memo asserted that contra-drug allegations were unsubstantiated, and at best required further investigation. Absent were the names of key North network players such as Rob Owen, which had come up in depositions the FBI took from several contra mercenaries. Contrary to the FBI's recommendations, the memo states that "a grand jury investigation at this point would represent a fishing expedition with little prospect that it would bear fruit."

The May 14 memo, sent to Republicans on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, was used to foil Sen. Kerry's efforts to begin an investigation into the North network last year.

Assistant Attorney Feldman refused to speak in private with staff of the House subcommittee on crime in late July. Feldman told *In These Times* he wants to speak publicly "to stop the rumors this subcommittee has been spreading. I've got nothing to hide." He asserted that appearing in a closed hearing and again in a public hearing might confirm in the minds of the public the appearance of wrong-doing on his part.

But a source close to the investigation who requested anonymity says Feldman may have been stalling to see what was revealed during Attorney General Edwin Meese's appearance before the Iran-contra committee. "If you were in Mr. Feldman's position, certainly as a defense tactic, you would want to have as much information as possible about where the chips are falling."

It appears that the Kerry and Hughes subcommittees will issue further subpoenas and continue their investigations well into the fall. Both are also expected to respond to recommendations forthcoming from the Iran-contra committee.

According to Hughes, the investigation so far has raised "a whole host of issues with regard to potential official involvement in certain aspects of gunrunning and narcotics trafficking between Florida and Central and South America" that will require a thorough investigation.

Dennis Bernstein and Robert Knight are covering contragate for *In These Times*.

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DRUGS FOR GUNS

Big papers give drug story small play

By Jim Naureckas

JOURNALISTS HAVE DOCUMENTED, THROUGH firsthand testimony and confirmations from government officials, that Nicaraguan rebels either participate in or profit from cocaine traffic into the U.S.

But this news did not appear in the influential media outlets that set the bounds of political debate. The *New York Times*, the *Washington Post* and even the *Miami Herald* have limited their coverage of the contra-drug connection to the barest mentions of other people's investigations.

In fact, *New York Times* stories have consistently disparaged allegations of contra drug running. Three stories that ran over one week last month contained some variations on this theme from the July 20 edition: "Investigators, including reporters from major news organizations, have tried without success to find proof of...allegations that military supplies for the contras may have been paid for with profits from drug trafficking."

Without validation by the elite press, crucial evidence of contra drug involvement gets thrown away with yesterday's newspaper, never entering public discourse. Yet this evidence, when assembled, points to a pattern of widespread, officially tolerated

Evidence gets thrown away with yesterday's news.

drug trafficking that may reach the highest levels of the contra hierarchy and into the U.S. government.

The first U.S. report linking contras to drugs came in a Dec. 20, 1985, Associated Press (AP) dispatch by Robert Parry and Brian Barger. They wrote that U.S. and Costa Rican law enforcement officials and American contra supporters told them Nicaraguan rebels in Costa Rica were financing their war through cocaine smuggling. The story also cited a secret CIA report that the contra army ARDE had used cocaine profits to buy \$250,000 in arms.

Hard-hitting as it was, the story distributed by AP was considerably watered down from the reporters' version. According to the September/October 1986 *Columbia Journalism Review*, AP editors omitted, at the U.S. government's request, allegations involving

John Hull, an American rancher who was the CIA's contra coordinator in Costa Rica.

"Hull has enough problems right now," a U.S. official reportedly told AP.

Even in this form, the story almost didn't run. Only the unauthorized release of the story on AP's Latin wires on December 16 forced AP to offer it to their English-language customers, according to the *Columbia Journalism Review*.

Freedom frogmen: Seth Rosenfeld of the *San Francisco Examiner* reported on March

16, 1986, that two convicted drug smugglers said they were working for the contra cause. "The money belonged to help the contra revolution," Nicaraguan expatriate Carlos Cabezas testified, before being convicted for his role in the 1983 "frogman case," described as the biggest cocaine bust in West Coast history. (The case involved frogmen retrieving cocaine from a ship in San Francisco Bay.)

Another "frogman" defendant, Julio Zavala, made the same claim, and the U.S. govern-

ment appeared to endorse it by returning to Zavala \$36,020 federal prosecutors had seized as drug proceeds at the request of a Costa Rican-based rebel group that claimed Zavala was a contra official. The group, the UDN-FARN, later became the nucleus for Lt. Col. Oliver North's "Southern Front."

Zavala told the *Examiner* he had given \$500,000 to the contras, largely proceeds from cocaine sales.

In the June 23, 1986, *Examiner*, Rosenfeld reported links between the FDN contra army and another major Bay Area cocaine importer, Norwin Meneses. The *Examiner* wrote that Meneses, a Nicaraguan expatriate, was an "organizer and financial supporter" of the contras, employed FDN members in his operations and had met with such top FDN officials as Adolfo Calero and Enrique Bermudez.

In 1986 Jesus Garcia, a Cuban-American mercenary who worked with Hull, began talking about a contra drug connection after being convicted on a weapons charge. "It is common knowledge here in Miami that this whole contra operation in Costa Rica was paid for with cocaine," Garcia told Vince Bielski and Dennis Bernstein, writing in *In These Times* (Dec. 10, 1986). "I actually saw the cocaine and the weapons together under one roof, weapons that I helped ship to Costa Rica."

Guns in, dope out: Other convicts told their stories to news operations like *Newsweek*, the *Wall Street Journal* and CBS' *West 57th*: Gary Betzner and Michael Tolliver, im-

Continued on page 22

An inside look at media's contragate mindset

By Joel Bleifuss

UNIL THE IRAN-CONTRA SCANDAL BROKE, America's love affair with Ronald Reagan had helped shield him from criticism. So successful was he at blurring the boundary between reality and fantasy that eventually many citizens' perceptions of public events became inured to demonstrable fact. Consequently, administration policies often went unchallenged.

Who's to be indicted for this breakdown in civic consciousness? One party without plausible deniability is the mainstream press, which helped keep the teflon on the presidency.

This culpability was explored by a panel on "Reporting the Iran-contra scandal" at the June 20 Investigative Reporters and Editors Conference in Phoenix. Journalists from *Newsweek*, the *Washington Post*, the *Wall Street Journal*, the *Los Angeles Times* and the *New York Times* gave a rare inside glimpse into how Reaganate news is made news and how—as in the case of contra drug smuggling—it isn't (see accompanying stories).

Arguably the most revealing analysis came from the *New York Times* Iran-contra editor Joel Brinkley, who posed this question to participants: "Why did the press, and the public, and Congress have all this information and just sort of let it slip through their fingers?"

He then offered this example of his own slippage: On Aug. 8, 1985, Brinkley, as one of the *New York Times* reporters responsible for covering the contras, came out with a story that began: "Rebels fighting to overthrow the Nicaraguan government have been receiving direct military advice from White

House officials on the National Security Council, an administration official said.... The operation has been run by a Marine officer who is a member of the NSC." That story, in the words of Brinkley, gave "the bare outlines of everything we have been hearing in these first six weeks of congressional hearings."

JOURNALISM

"I wrote that story and didn't follow it up adequately," continued Brinkley. "Five years of the Reagan administration had brought on uncounted—I can't count them—stupidities, blunders, illegalities or apparent illegalities; mining the harbors, preparing an assassination manual for the contras, the Marines in Beirut, you can go on and on and on. And all these things come and they make a splash."

"I am not writing stories to cause parades in the streets, but when you write stories and nobody gives a hoot...you just lose the momentum to keep going with it. And that is not an excuse but that...is an illustration of the mindset that is set in a lot of Washington newspaper offices."

Later Brinkley offered this observation: "Who's to blame? We're all to blame. I think the American public, and Congress as a reflection of it, and the press as an inadvertent reflection of all of that, [all] sort of got suckered by a man with such immense popularity that he acquired a degree of personal power that I don't think we have experienced since Roosevelt."

"Every time we wrote one of the stories," he continued, "the White House would simply offer bald-faced lies and accuse us of being pro-Communist. Maybe I shouldn't care about that, and I don't really, but after

a year of contra reporting...when you begin to challenge the White House and get in response accusations and direct lies of the facts, it simply wears you down.... And there begins to grow a seed of doubt in the minds of some editors: 'Is Brinkley really right? What's this about?' That is not a good explanation. But I am human and I did not follow it up...."

Although Brinkley candidly appraised why he and others in the national press did not buck public opinion and portray Ronald Reagan and his administration for the liars they are, he failed to account for the role that same press played in placing the president in that supposedly unassailable position. Nor did he address the problems of an editorial system that failed to give him support when it should have.

And when asked if the ideology of *New York Times* editors influenced decisions on what news is covered and what is not, Brinkley invoked journalistic objectivity.

"That's just nonsense," he responded. "I know of no ideological strictures except my own that dictate how I direct our staff on Iran-contra, and I try to ignore mine, just as we all do in journalism, not always successfully."

Objectivity is itself an ideology in the world of journalism. And it's this ideology that, on the basis of presenting the two sides of every question, obliges the national press—and, it often appears, the *New York Times* in particular—to rely on unidentified administration sources to give that other side. For the press to continue granting credence to these sources during the current scandal, when most White House officials are now on record as public liars, seems risky, if not stupid.

CIA agent's lawyer moves for secrecy in Christic suit

By Dennis Bernstein, Richard Ryan and Peter Shinkle

WASHINGTON, D.C.

LAST YEAR RET. GEN. RICHARD SECORD HIRED Glenn Robinette to discredit the Christic Institute's suit against him. (This was in addition to asking Robinette to build a security fence around Lt. Col. Oliver North's home.) On July 24 a District of Columbia court heard Robinette's attorneys argue that their client's pretrial testimony in the suit should be closed to the public and press in order to protect Robinette's reputation and privacy.

The Christic suit claims that North, Secord, Albert Hakim, Robert Owen, Theodore Shackley, Adolfo Calero and 24 others in the contra-support network planned the 1984 bombing of defecting contra leader Eden Pastora that killed eight people. The civil suit, brought under the Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations (RICO) act, also alleges the defendants ran a cocaine-smuggling operation out of Costa Rica and planned to assassinate the U.S. ambassador there in order to provoke U.S. intervention in Nicaragua.

Robinette, a former CIA agent who allegedly no longer works for the Company, is not a defendant in the Christic suit, but his testimony is important because the congressional hearings uncovered that Secord had paid Robinette more than \$60,000 to gather derogatory information about the plaintiffs

and to bribe as-yet-unidentified people.

Political analysts believe Robinette's deposition could be explosive because of his relationship to Secord, North and Oliver "Buck" Revell, the senior FBI representative on the National Security Council's "Operations Sub-Group" on terrorism.

"Not one question": According to an FBI report released by the Iran-contra select committees, North met with Robinette on July 17, 1986, to discuss a former contra sup-

CONTRAGATE

porter who was talking publicly about North's involvement in a network that was allegedly resupplying the contras and smuggling cocaine from a base in Costa Rica. North asked Robinette to meet with the FBI concerning the former contra supporter, Jack Terrell. Later that evening Robinette met with the FBI.

A July 22, 1986, FBI report outlines a discussion between North and two FBI agents about the former contra Terrell, although it does not explain the FBI's reason for investigating Terrell. The same two agents interrogated Terrell in August 1986, ostensibly about a threat on the life of the president in July of last year.

But during 12 hours of questioning and a polygraph test over two days, "not one question did they ask me about the president," Terrell told *In These Times*. Seven people attended the interrogation, although only the

two FBI agents identified themselves, according to Terrell, who noted the session was more like a "political debriefing" than an investigation.

Terrell, who once led Miskito Indians against the Nicaraguan army, said the event "may have been intended to intimidate me."

The possibility of FBI participation in the attempt to discredit the lawsuit is also raised by the July 19, 1986, entry of the name of Assistant FBI Director Revell in Robinette's appointment calendar, two days after North met with Robinette.

Revell's involvement with Robinette was not discussed during the open sessions of the Iran-contra hearings. Said Christic attorney Lanny Sinkin, "[The Congress] didn't get who he talked to, who he paid, what he got, what other activities he engaged in—we will go after all that information."

On July 1 Robinette was subpoenaed by the Christic Institute to give a sworn deposition on July 23. But on July 22 his lawyers filed a motion to restrict that deposition by closing it to the press and public.

On July 24 Christic attorney Daniel Sheehan told U.S. District Court Judge Joyce Green that Robinette's testimony was "of vital public importance" and should remain open. Sheehan argued that during previous testimony in Costa Rica, an attorney for the defendants had agreed that all depositions would be public because a "favorable" local newspaper wanted to cover them. But Thomas C. Green, the man who helped North and Fawn Hall destroy documents and the attorney for Secord, Hakim, Shackley and other defendants, said the lawyer who made that agreement, Florence Snyder, was not "competent" to do so.

Robinette's attorney, Mark Tuohey, told

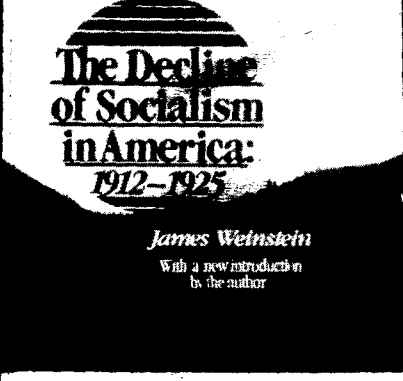
the court that *New York Times* statements falsely attributed to Robinette had damaged his client's reputation. He said his motion to restrict discovery was intended to avoid a repetition of that "abuse."

Change of heart: Tuohey charged that the Christic Institute attorneys solicited the press to attend the deposition. In response, Sheehan told the court that he "received requests" from several news organizations to attend. He also asked the court to consider why Robinette would suddenly become "shy" of the media now, after he had granted interviews to the Associated Press and CBS News earlier in the year.

Attorney Stephen Kohn, who represented *In These Times*, the *Village Voice* and New York City's WBAI radio in a friend-of-the-court appearance, said, "We believe there is a First Amendment right to access to depositions...in cases concerning the public interest, such as this case, which concerns the assassination of a foreign leader abroad by alleged representatives of our government."

Judge Joyce Green, sensing acrimony between the parties, suggested Robinette's deposition might be held in a courtroom monitored by a magistrate to avoid a "circus-like atmosphere." Both sides said they would consider such a resolution of the dispute. Green will postpone her decision until a ruling in the same suit is made by U.S. District Court of South Florida Judge James L. King. On July 27 in Miami the defendants made four motions to restrict discovery in the case. King is expected to announce his decision in early August.

Freelance writers **Dennis Bernstein, Richard Ryan and Peter Shinkle** are part of *In These Times'* ongoing investigation of the contragate morass and various associated scandals.



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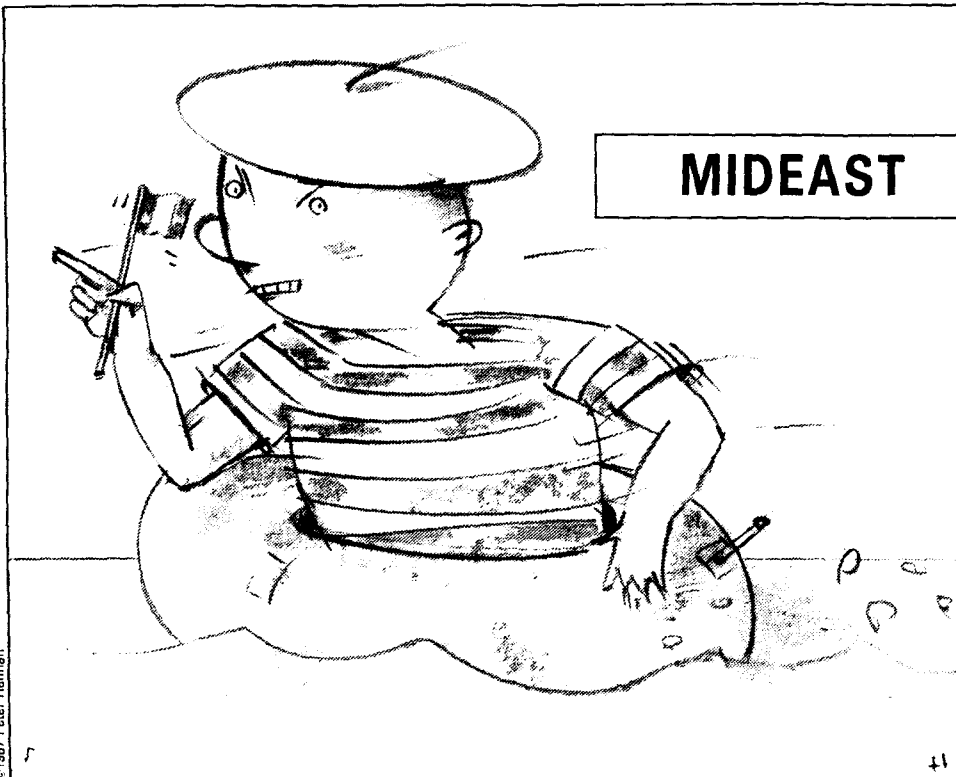
By Diana Johnstone

PARIS

FRANCE IS ACTING READY TO HELP THE U.S. grab the Iranian tar baby, even though neither one seems to be sure how to come unstuck. French Defense Minister André Giraud has ordered the Mediterranean aeronaval group around the aircraft carrier *Clemenceau* to sail toward the Persian Gulf to "protect French interests." France has thus assumed its role of "Little Satan" tagging after the "Great Satan," number-one sidekick for imperial America's global misadventures.

French leaders assert they want to show "firmness," but will not get into a fight. Their warships are sailing slowly toward the Indian Ocean, with orders not to enter the Gulf, but stay just outside the Hormuz straits, trying to look fierce. Iran dismisses this as mere "gesticulation." It is nuclear gesticulation: spokesmen made clear that frigates in the *Clemenceau* group are armed with tactical nuclear weapons. The French naval movement looks like preparation to enforce a blockade of Iran once the U.N. Security Council votes sanctions against Iran for not accepting its call for a cease-fire.

Weapons shipments: This naval gesticulation is the latest phase in a Franco-Iranian conflict that France got into inadvertently, simply by selling Iraq a large part of the ~~arsenal used to make war against Iran~~. It took the abduction of hapless French citizens in Lebanon and various terror bombings for the French to realize that the Iranians were truly angry. Thereupon, French officials tried to even things a bit by surreptitiously



shipping munitions to Iran. Nothing fancy: the jealous Iraq lobby was watching and ready to blow the whistle.

In Paris, a 29-year-old Iranian named Wahid Gordji was the main contact for the Quai d'Orsay diplomats working on the attempt to normalize relations with Iran. Gordji reportedly negotiated with French agent and diplomat Didier Destremau both munitions sales and the discreet expulsion from France of Khomeini's enemy Massoud Rajavi, leader of the Mujahidin Khalq revolutionary organization.

In the investigation of the terrorist bombings in Paris last September, different police

services favor different suspects. The DST (roughly equivalent to the FBI) recently got an important tip-off supporting its favorite theory that the terrorists were working for Tehran. Learning of this, Destremau reportedly tipped off his friend Gordji, who took refuge from a pending summons for questioning in the Iranian Embassy, where he works as an interpreter without diplomatic status.

Interior Minister Charles Pasqua brutally snatched foreign policy away from the Quai d'Orsay by ordering French police to surround the Iranian Embassy supposedly to

force Gordji to come out and testify. The real reason may have been to pre-empt a French Embassy hostages crisis in Tehran such as the Americans were subjected to in 1980. Pasqua's "firmness" would no doubt please the Americans but also the Iraqi lobby, which was worried by signs of rapprochement between France and Iran.

Web of mistrust: Khomeini's Iran and the West deal with each other with a cynicism unmitigated by any mutual comprehension or sympathy. The Gulf war is a tangle of moralistic pretensions and sordid economic self-interest, complicated by cultural incomprehension and intolerance. Moreover, there are rival clans of Iranians, rival clans of Arabs, rival clans of French or American agents and dealers, not to mention the rival secret services of the entire world, all trying to trip each other up.

In another spectacular gesture, on July 17, as British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher was in Washington doing her best to boost Ronald Reagan, France broke relations with Iran—the first time since World War II that France has broken diplomatic relations. Former Iranian President Bani Sadr observed that breaking diplomatic relations puts international affairs even more completely in the hands of arms dealers and secret service agents.

U.S. Secretary of State George Shultz realized, probably, how much damage Iran-gate did to the confidence of the Gulf Arabs in their American protector. Therefore, the U.S. Navy has gone to the Gulf to bolster Iraq's effort to strangle Iranian oil exports by protecting pro-Iraqi shipping from Iranian retaliation. Perhaps French leaders just want to express their solidarity with Uncle Sam now that he has gone in to save France's main debtor from a defeat that could leave the bills unpaid. □

The NDP's fantastic new worry: peaking too soon

By Doug Smith

WINNIPEG

IN THE SPRING OF 1984, WITH A FEDERAL ELECTION just months in the offing, pollsters and pundits were getting ready to bury the New Democratic Party (NDP). The social democratic NDP has been the perennial third party of Canadian politics since its formation in 1961, but that spring it had sunk to 10 percent in the polls. When confronted about the NDP's sagging fortunes, party leader Ed Broadbent smiled and joked. "After all," he said, "we don't want to peak too soon."

Peaking too soon has never been a concern of NDP leaders—until now. Starting in December national polls have shown the NDP making breakthrough after breakthrough. First they overtook the plummeting Conservative Party. Then they passed the Liberal Party in Quebec, a province where the NDP has never won a seat. And recently NDP has been topping national public opinion polls.

Political observers of all stripes have been wondering whether those polling results would translate to actual votes. On July 20 they got their answer. In by-elections held in three ridings in disparate parts of the country—Newfoundland, Ontario and the

Yukon, the NDP won important victories. They retained the riding of Hamilton-Mountain and took the Yukon and St. John's East away from the governing Conservative Party.

Free-fall: The Liberals are Canada's traditional government party, often holding office for decades at a time. When it falls from favor voters usually elect large Conservative governments, which generally serve for a single term. That pattern could be breaking. Since winning his massive majority in 1984 Conservative leader Brian Mulroney presided over a government unable to control the political agenda. Scandals large and small have forced key ministers to resign. Cronyism in public appointments has offended many Canadians. And the central plank in his plan to revive the economy, a free trade deal with the U.S., appears unpopular and unfeasible.

But the Liberals have not been able to benefit from the government's free-fall in public support. Last fall senior party strategists and former Liberal cabinet ministers tried to dump the current leader, John Turner. It was felt Turner, a former corporate lawyer, could not project the small "L" liberal image the party would need to win the next election. Turner beat back the challenge, but

the by-election results have intensified scrutiny of his leadership.

So, it is Ed Broadbent's good fortune to be facing two opponents who are largely discredited in the public eye. A genial former political science professor, he has taken the NDP through three federal elections since becoming leader in 1975. Voters may not subscribe to NDP policies, but they certainly

CANADA

feel comfortable with Broadbent. Even during the party's dark days in 1984, Broadbent's personal popularity was considerable.

NDP hurdles ahead: This will be the first time the party will have to mount a truly national campaign—in 1984 the NDP staved off disaster by concentrating their efforts in 40 key ridings, winning 30 of them. A party eyeing government will have to target closer to 200 seats. In Quebec where the party has no roots the problem of candidate selection is monumental. But with the nationalist movement in disarray, many former Parti Quebecois activists are looking at the NDP with new eyes.

The bewildering surge in NDP popularity has left many people, including many longtime party supporters, asking just what a federal NDP government would do. In the last election Broadbent campaigned for tax reform, a national child care system, a national economic strategy and Canadian independence, wrapping it all up in a defense of

the concerns of "ordinary Canadians."

The prospect of an NDP government has upset a number of very unordinary Canadians. The *Toronto Globe and Mail* surveyed a dozen businessmen across the country, with almost unanimous results. An NDP government would, in the words of Adam Zimmerman, chairman of MacMillan Bloedel Limited, be "a nightmare."

Perhaps the most contentious NDP policy will be a commitment to withdraw from NATO, combined with an increase in defense spending to develop an independent defense policy. This policy will be attacked as anti-American, and voters will be reminded that a number of NDP legislators booed Ronald Reagan when he addressed the House of Commons this summer.

Prime Minister Mulroney is turning most of his attention to the NDP, warning Canadians about the implications of their policies. And this spring the party sent out a national fundraising letter with a crude summary of the NDP policies. It concluded that "elimination of private enterprise, the introduction of a Soviet-style 'planned economy,'...they're all part of the NDP formula." Red-scare tactics may rebound on the Conservatives—they will be hard pressed to convince anyone that Ed Broadbent is a bolshevik. But since the next federal election could be as much as two years away, he's got to make sure he doesn't peak too soon. □

Doug Smith is a Winnipeg-based journalist and broadcaster.

Arafat talks about the PLO and the Mideast



The PLO recently concluded a meeting in Algiers that ended speculation about Yasser Arafat losing support of Palestinians.

By Afif Safieh

TUNIS

Marshall McLuhan, author of *The Global Village*, would have enjoyed watching Yasser Arafat at work when I interviewed him recently in Tunis. We were repeatedly interrupted by telephone calls from Palestinian officials in the besieged refugee camps of Lebanon, from Lima, Peru, where the second Convention of the Confederation of Palestinian Communities in Central and Latin America (more than 400,000 persons) was in preparation and by the arrival, by telefax, of the joint Soviet-Palestinian Communique. The world has really shrunk into a planetary village. The Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO), since its evacuation from Beirut in 1982, may be nowhere, but it is surely anywhere Palestinians happen to be.

Safieh: For many observers the PLO seems to have been condemned to have either unity, but with no strategy, or a strategy but at the expense of unity. Have

you succeeded in Algiers, during the last session of the Palestinian National Council, to reconcile unity and strategy?

Arafat: This hypothesis is not accurate. Our political programs adopted by the successive National Councils—whether all the organizations have participated or not—constitute and define the strategy that our elected leadership is under obligation to implement. Never in the history of the PLO have we succeeded or wanted to include all the organizations in the Executive Committee, or even in the National Council, either because some factions prefer to stand aside or because the National Council refused to allow a group to join—as was recently the case with the Abu Nidal Group for reasons known by all.

Is the unity achieved in Algiers—catalyzed by the “Camp Wars” in Lebanon—only valid for a defensive military strategy or also for an offensive diplomatic strategy?

From 1982 up to 1987 we have had an

uninterrupted military-diplomatic confrontation. Gen. Sharon in 1982 thought he could finish off the PLO in a few hours, or at most in a few days. We surprised him with the longest war of attrition in the regional history and we have defeated the Israeli military doctrine of lightning wars—the blitzkriegs.

In all previous Israeli wars a general has emerged to be celebrated as the architect of victory: Dayan, Sharon, etc. But the invasion of Lebanon is an orphan. Defeat is always an orphan. Eighty-eight days, that was the duration of only one battle, the battle of Beirut, but the war is still going on today. The Palestinian resistance, in alliance with Lebanese patriots, is undertaking a pro-

We do not struggle for the love of war. This tragedy was imposed on us. It requires a political solution.

tracted war of attrition against the Israeli occupying forces. Only a few days ago Itzhak Rabin had to admit the failure of the objectives of the Israeli adventure in Lebanon, that they had called “Peace in Galilee.”

Where is Menachem Begin today? He lives reclusive in his residence, profoundly depressed by the failures with which he ended his political career.

Today there are two centers of gravity: our people under occupation (they are our strategic reinforcements) and our refugee camps in Lebanon.

Our National Council was the reflection of the unwavering unity of our people. Its success has put an end to the attempts of external interference by certain Arab regimes.

Are you a man of war or a man of peace?

We do not struggle for the love of war. This tragedy was imposed on us Palestinians. I hope to be well understood: I struggle for a political solution, so that our people can live free and independent. And it is not the first time that I am saying this. In 1974, in my speech at the General Assembly of the U.N. I spoke of the olive branch I was holding in one hand and of the gun in the other. The task of the gun is to preserve and to protect the chances of the olive branch. To prevent it from fading away. To keep it green and promising.

Today, and as our Algiers resolutions stipulate clearly, we struggle for an international conference that will lay the foundations of a durable peace.

You have said that in your 1974 speech at the U.N. you addressed history. Do you intend to go to the U.N. this year and address geography?

I will not be tempted by this prose to give you a title for this interview. For the moment no decision was taken concerning my participation in the General Assembly of the U.N., but before that U.N. session we are anticipating a hot summer, militarily, politically and diplomatically.

For the first time a communist representative was elected into the Executive Committee of the PLO. Is this a reward for the friendly superpower and a warning for the hostile superpower?

And for the first time the Islamic Trend was represented in the National Council and the Central Council and if they so wanted they could have been represented in the Executive Committee. The PLO is an authentic and genuinely democratic organization. The entry of a communist delegate reflects domestic and internal reality.

Is the PLO an aligned or a non-aligned movement?

Non-aligned, for sure. From an organic, but also philosophical point of view. As a national liberation movement we are one of the vice-presidents of that important political grouping in international relations.

What is desirable, possible and acceptable?

The acceptable is the possible. We ask for the implementation of the U.N. resolutions pertinent to the questions of Palestine. We are for respect of international legality. We

are for an international system where the rule of law, and not the rule by force, prevails. As you can see, we are not asking for the impossible.

Each actor seems to have his own variant of the international conference. Half of the Israeli government is in favor of a semi-international conference and the American administration seems to have a contradictory policy. How do you intend to circumvent these obstacles?

I am undertaking this diplomatic battle with the same composure with which we face military challenges. We remain vigilant and ready for all eventualities. We follow everything scrupulously and in detail. We have long ago created commissions to prepare studies on all the issues that will be raised in the International Conference. Since our National Councils in 1983, 1984 and 1987 had adopted the principle of special Palestinian/Jordanian relations in the framework of a future confederation, we have a commission that has already submitted several legal and political studies on all the confederations that have emerged throughout history. The same applies to the International Conference itself, the ways and means of the practical implementation of the U.N. resolutions, etc.

Do you foresee a role for the U.N. during a period between the Israeli occupation and Palestinian sovereignty?

There will certainly be a period of transition. We are in favor of the U.N. taking charge of the occupied territories for three to six months while a popular referendum is organized.

Do you see a role for the U.N. beyond that period?

I have frequently expressed agreement for stationing U.N. forces at the borders, in order to meet security concerns. The Israeli leaders have ridiculous pretensions. Their arguments are tailored to suit their territorial appetite. They are totally anachronistic in the nuclear age.

In order to avoid a repetition of the cycle that led to the 1967 war, would you agree to the principle that those U.N. troops can only be withdrawn in case of a unanimous vote at the U.N. Security Council and not at the simple demand by one member state?

I see no objection to that.

European positions differ from those of the Americans, but so far they have had little impact on the course of events.

The European stand is satisfactory but still insufficient. It is high time that European leaders realize that our destiny and security in the Middle East and in Europe are intimately interdependent. If the prevailing deadlock is left to perpetuate itself, the volcano that will erupt, the typhoon and cyclone that will result, will not leave the European continent unaffected.

Time is running short.

Have you tried to convince the Soviet leadership to "link" the reestablishment of diplomatic relations between the Soviet Union and Israel with the recognition of the PLO by the American administration, and to couple Jewish emigration from the Soviet Union with Israel's respect for the U.N. resolution?

The Soviet leadership keeps us constantly

informed and in great precision on their discussions with the Americans and the Israelis. For example, when in 1984 Andrei Gromyko met Shamir at the U.N., I had two discussions with Gromyko in East Berlin in which he informed me on the content of their exchange. The same procedure applies to their recent contracts. The two superpowers have discussions on a wide range of subjects that go from Star Wars to intermediate missiles to European security, to the hot points throughout the world, namely the Middle East, the Iran/Iraq war, Afghanistan, South Africa, Nicaragua, Cambodia.

The Soviets, like the PLO, as a matter of fact, try to promote the idea of an active international conference that will not be simply an umbrella. We favor an international conference that has the rights of arbitration and not simply a role of pure mediation.

In 1981 your statement saying that you preferred to see Begin rather than Shimon Peres elected intrigued everybody. Some observers thought to have understood that this was your indirect way of helping Peres get himself elected. For the coming electoral battle in Israel, what is your preference?

Why do you want me to prefer one to the other? Both compete in their oppression of the Palestinian people. The Labor Party is simply more skillful in deceiving international public opinion. Do you know that the balance sheet of the Labor Party on deportations, imprisonment, demolition of houses is even more disastrous than that of Likud? To put it simply, we want our national rights, be it with Labor, Likud or others.

What do you expect from those meetings that are getting more and more frequent

between the PLO and the Israeli pacifists?

That is the right path. We are a civilized people. And our political message is clear. We are for dialogue with all Jews, any Jew in Israel, or elsewhere, who recognizes our national rights. But painfully I have to say that while our parliament in exile was adopting resolutions in favor of dialogue, the Israeli Knesset was adopting laws prohibiting any contact, and dialogue was considered punishable by law. Tell me, now, who really wants peace and who doesn't?

What was your saddest day?

I have had many a sad day in my life.

What was your happiest day?

My happiest day? I haven't lived it yet. ☐

Afif Safieh is a former member of the Palestine National Council, now a visiting scholar at Harvard University.

New Jewish Agenda seeks a two-state Middle East solution

By Shel Horowitz and Deborah C. Friedman

SHANA MARGOLIN, A DELEGATE AT THE NEW Jewish Agenda's biannual conference in June, describes the seven-year-old organization as a "lightning rod" for American Jews. "We take the flak," she says, "but then the Jewish community moves on to accept it."

This is particularly true about attitudes toward the Mideast and the PLO. "Agenda was in the forefront of American Jews objecting to the war in Lebanon," Margolin explains. And it was "a real turning point." After that "it became O.K. for American Jews to criticize Israel."

NJA Executive Director David Coyne agrees. "Increasingly," he says, "people in the American Jewish establishment have recognized that NJA has many committed, able, talented members whose contribution to the wider Jewish community is vital to its development." To strengthen that attitude, local Agenda chapters are applying for membership in Jewish community relations councils, Coyne reports. "Our public exposure and popularity within the Jewish community seem to be on the rise; our potential is just beginning to be tapped."

NJA's 4,000 members span several generations, religious and sexual orientations and are concerned with a wide range of social issues and problems, but the organization sees its central role as essentially two-fold. Within the American left, it fights for Israel. Within the organized Jewish community it fights for a solution to the Mideast crisis through an internationally negotiated settlement and the creation of a Palestinian state on the West Bank and Gaza strip.

NJA's success in reaching out to the American Jewish community was evident at the June conference by the presence of at least eight rabbis and several rabbinical students, and by various delegates' reports of its activities. These have included NJA-sponsored tours of speakers from the Israeli peace movement in this country, which have been facilitated by the organization's international role.

PLO invitations to attend Palestinian events indicate NJA's international impact. Philadelphia member Hilda Silverman found

Yassir Arafat and other PLO officials eager to talk. Silverman represented NJA at recent meetings with Arafat "to express concerns" and try to move the PLO toward a public renunciation of armed struggle.

"Arafat and people who work with him have an idea that Agenda and similar organizations are very important in the Jewish community," she reports. "He thought we could have a counter-AIPAC lobby. Arafat

JEWISH LEFT

kept a plane waiting for two hours to meet with us. We met with 10 top PLO leaders, including the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, the Communist Party, Arafat's chief of staff and the ambassador to Tunisia and the Arab League. We handed out literature all over the place. We were not anti-Zionist and we were welcomed with open arms."

Silverman believes the PLO would go much further toward peace if Israel re-

sponded positively to its many overtures. "They are reaching out for peace," she says. "But if there is no response they are stronger for armed struggle."

Agenda's meeting with the PLO has given them an additional opening to American Jewish organizations. "The mainstream Jewish community is damned interested. I have had many opportunities to talk to leaders of major organizations and the Jewish press," Silverman says. She does not defend past PLO wrongs, but hopes that these efforts have helped "de-demonize these people," and believes that negotiations with the PLO would reduce pressure on it toward violent action.

NJA sent observers to the Palestine National Council meeting in Algiers last spring and participant delegates to a recent U.N. Non-Governmental Organization conference on Palestine in New York. At the latter meeting, Coyne reports, NJA worked with PLO representatives to get a resolution adopted calling for the establishment of a Palestinian state alongside Israel. ☐

Shel Horowitz is a freelance writer and member of New Jewish Agenda. Deborah C. Friedman is a community activist and member of New Jewish Agenda.



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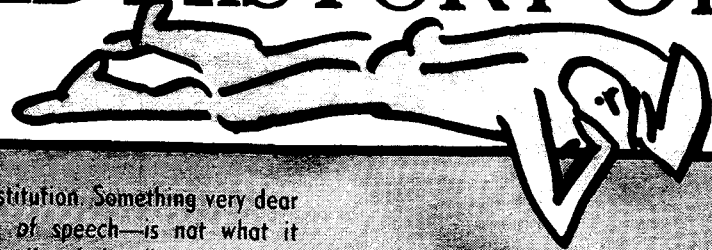
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THE TORTURED HISTORY OF F



By David Kairys

IT WAS JUNE 10, 1894, AND REV. WILLIAM DAVIS went to Boston Common and out back from the Bible and to talk to whomever would listen about God and the corruption of local government officials. He wound up in the Charles Street jail—arrested and convicted in what would become the first free speech decision by the U.S. Supreme Court.

The court ruled, unanimously, that the mayor



Goldman began, but when she first mentioned Ibsen, the sergeant said she couldn't say his name. She protested. The crowd, at first amused by the absurdity of the police order, was roughly ordered to disperse with clubs.

Not long afterward, the Industrial Workers of the World, trying to organize migratory workers, started a national campaign they called "free speech fights." They would gather on a street corner or a city that had banned street speaking and step up on a soapbox to speak, one of a time, until the jails, schools and other available buildings were full of free speech prisoners. People came from all over the country, often hitchhiking or riding on cars, and cities frequently relented. But the courts regularly upheld bans on speaking, assembling and picketing in public places, often exempting only the Salvation Army.

Even as late as 1935, after the passage of the National Labor Relations Act, the Congress of Industrial Organizations regularly prohibited from leafletting, speaking and public and private meetings. In Jersey City, N.J., Mayor Frank Hague threw many of the union organizers out of town. The CIO's suit against Hague went to the Supreme Court, which ruled, contrary to its earlier decision in *Rev. Davis*,

could "absolutely or conditionally forbid public speaking in a highway or public park." It was no different, the court said, than the owner of a private house to forbid speech in his house.

Emma Goldman, a well-known political activist and lecturer, gave a talk in 1909 on dramatist Henrik Ibsen. Among the people in the packed hall in New York City were anti-farmed policemen. Goldman mounted the podium and said she could speak as long as she spoke in the time—a common police command that meant don't say anything political.

Censorship was not new to Goldman; she and Margaret Sanger sometimes spent a night in jail for lecturing about birth control,

though owned by the city and controlled by the mayor, were held in "trust" for the use of the people "for purposes of assembly, communicating thoughts between citizens, and discussing public questions." In this same period the Supreme Court also adopted the "clear and present danger" rule, which is now interpreted to protect speech unless it creates an immediate, definite and serious danger.

Where credit is due: The last quotes from Supreme Court decisions represent current thinking, for the earlier episodes and court decisions are rarely if ever mentioned in our courses on history or social studies or in our celebrations like the upcoming 200th anniversary

of the Constitution. Something very dear to us—freedom of speech—is not what it seems. Our "founding fathers" accomplished many great things, but establishment of freedom of speech was not among them. In fact, the labor movement deserves more credit for free speech as we know it than the founding fathers.

In the '30s we had no legally protected rights of free speech, but we had the form we now know it. Criticism of the government or government officials, called seditious libel, could legally be and regularly was made criminal. Every state had a seditious libel law when the Constitution was adopted, and the founding fathers in Congress initiated and passed the repressive Alien and Sedition Act within a decade of adoption of the First Amendment. The Federalists used this act to suppress their outspoken critics; when the Republicans gained the presidency in 1801, they also prosecuted their opponents, including a minister who criticized Thomas Jefferson in a Thanksgiving Day sermon. More than 2,000 were prosecuted, and many served substantial prison terms. A laborer served a two-year sentence for erecting a sign that criticized the tax laws and urged "peace and retirement to the president."

The founding fathers were not the political elite who were more interested in promoting commerce and restraining the democratic impulses of the public than in any new notions of free speech. Hamilton, Madison, Washington, Franklin—even Jefferson and Paine—all supported criminalization of seditious libel. Historian Leonard Levy concluded that our early leaders generally "assumed that truth was one-sided and that freedom should be available only to believers"—a way of thinking that certainly has not disappeared.

The courts upheld seditious libel laws and suppression of speech or writing based on the flimsiest proof that it may lead to disorder or unlawful conduct sometime in the future—

however remote or indirect that threat might have been. This "bad tendency doctrine" was frequently used to uphold prohibitions in the Southern states of speech and writings that opposed slavery on the ground that they might lead to a slave rebellion.

Planting the seed: There was often vigorous, sometimes vitriolic debate, and a tradition of speech and struggle to obtain the right to speak developed. But until the '30s speech was at the sufferance of local and national governments, which could and frequently did prohibit and punish anything that government officials, the business establishment or others who had influence did not want to hear.

The Constitution's framers largely had the pre-existing English conception of speech, which disfavored prior censorship of the press but embraced criminalization of seditious libel and control of speech in public places by local authorities. Nevertheless, they were forced by a strong minority among them to place a seed in the constitutional scheme—the First Amendment's restriction that "Congress shall make no law abridging freedom of speech," which

retain regulation of speech for the states.

This seed has been nurtured and developed by courageous, often rebellious Americans—including most prominently opponents of slavery and racism, advocates of women's rights and trade unionists—who fought for and shaped our system of free expression. We should celebrate this history of people struggling, often at considerable personal risk, to improve their lives and their country.

Understanding this history can also help us understand the present. Why, for example, do so many people feel excluded from effective expression at the same time we celebrate the American miracle of freedom of speech? Because the types of speech that are constitutionally protected were appropriate for the '30s when free speech was first legally protected, but the means of communication have drastically changed.

The labor movement sought and won the most effective means then available for reaching and organizing working people—leafletting, assembling and demonstrating in public places, picketing, door-to-door canvassing. But now we receive ideas and information almost exclusively from television, radio, newspapers and magazines. The scope of our speech rights has been frozen while technological and social changes have rendered them seriously obsolete.

The American people lack the opportunity to engage meaningfully in that discourse on the issues of the day that we celebrate so self-righteously. The right to picket or demonstrate enables us to show our opposition to an institution, policy or individual, but public debate, to the extent there is any, is normally conducted without us, and often without our views. Our rights of speech now offer essentially the ability to display displeasure, which may or may



FREE SPEECH

not gain a spot on the local news, often depending on whether it includes some illegality or gimmick. One must have a lot of money or power to speak in any depth and be heard in the major mass media.

TV networks and local stations and large newspapers—owned by fewer and fewer large corporations with less and less experience or concern with journalism or public discourse—claim absolute protection not only from government censorship (protection that is certainly appropriate) but also from any claims to access by the people. Although they monopolize the marketplace of ideas, the courts tend to protect them against claims to access as if they were merely individuals handing out leaflets on a streetcorner. This has occurred even as the content of our major media has degenerated; the corporate standardbearers of free speech acknowledge and sometimes glorify their avoidance of ideas or controversy. Limited rights to access, such as a right to reply, are common in Western Europe, and they would probably improve the quality and audience interest of the media as well as enhance democracy. A much broader range of people and ideas must gain access to our media.

The court retreats: Recent decisions by the Supreme Court have made it worse. The court has invalidated as a violation of free speech a Florida statute giving electoral candidates a right to reply in a newspaper when they are criticized; free-speech protections have been extended to all corporations, even as to issues unrelated to their businesses, giving commercial speech the same protection as political speech; and limits on the amount of money an individual can spend to support a candidate have been invalidated as violations of free speech. Meanwhile, earlier decisions protecting the right of individuals to distribute literature in shopping centers have been overruled.

The court has increasingly narrowed and restricted the free-speech rights available to people of ordinary means, enlarged the free-speech rights of wealthy people and corporations, and erected a free-speech barrier to public access and important electoral and economic reforms. Instead of empowering the citizenry, freedom of speech has recently been used by conservative justices to enhance the power of corporations and very rich people and to keep working people out of the marketplace of ideas.

Even more basically, after 200 years democracy must mean more than voting every four years and the right to picket when you're really upset. Our glorification of the history and modern reality of free speech has masked the lack of substantial participation in the decisions that affect our lives. We have allowed decisions that fundamentally affect us—about the use of our resources, the work of our people, our health and safety, our economy, our environment—to be left to a private business elite that is not elected or responsible to the public and whose commitment to greed has come to be viewed as acceptable or, in recent years, even fashionable.

The mythic version of freedom of speech is



a central element of our national identity. It can be easily manipulated to legitimize the lack of adequate means of expression or participation, enlarged power for the already pow-

erful and even military intervention abroad. The Reagan administration is adept at such manipulation, while consistently seeking to weaken the protections of the Bill of Rights. Those who praise free speech most in the abstract often seem to honor it least in practice.

It is right to celebrate our unique history and tradition of free speech, but it is also essential to remember about eternal vigilance. The meaning of liberty changes with changing historical conditions. Today it should include the ability of the people to express themselves meaningfully in matters of public policy. As in the past, to win this political right may require actions now outside the law in order to gain social and legal acceptance.

David Kairys is a constitutional lawyer and author and adjunct professor of sociology at the University of Pennsylvania. He edited and co-authored *The Politics of Law*, from which this article was largely derived.

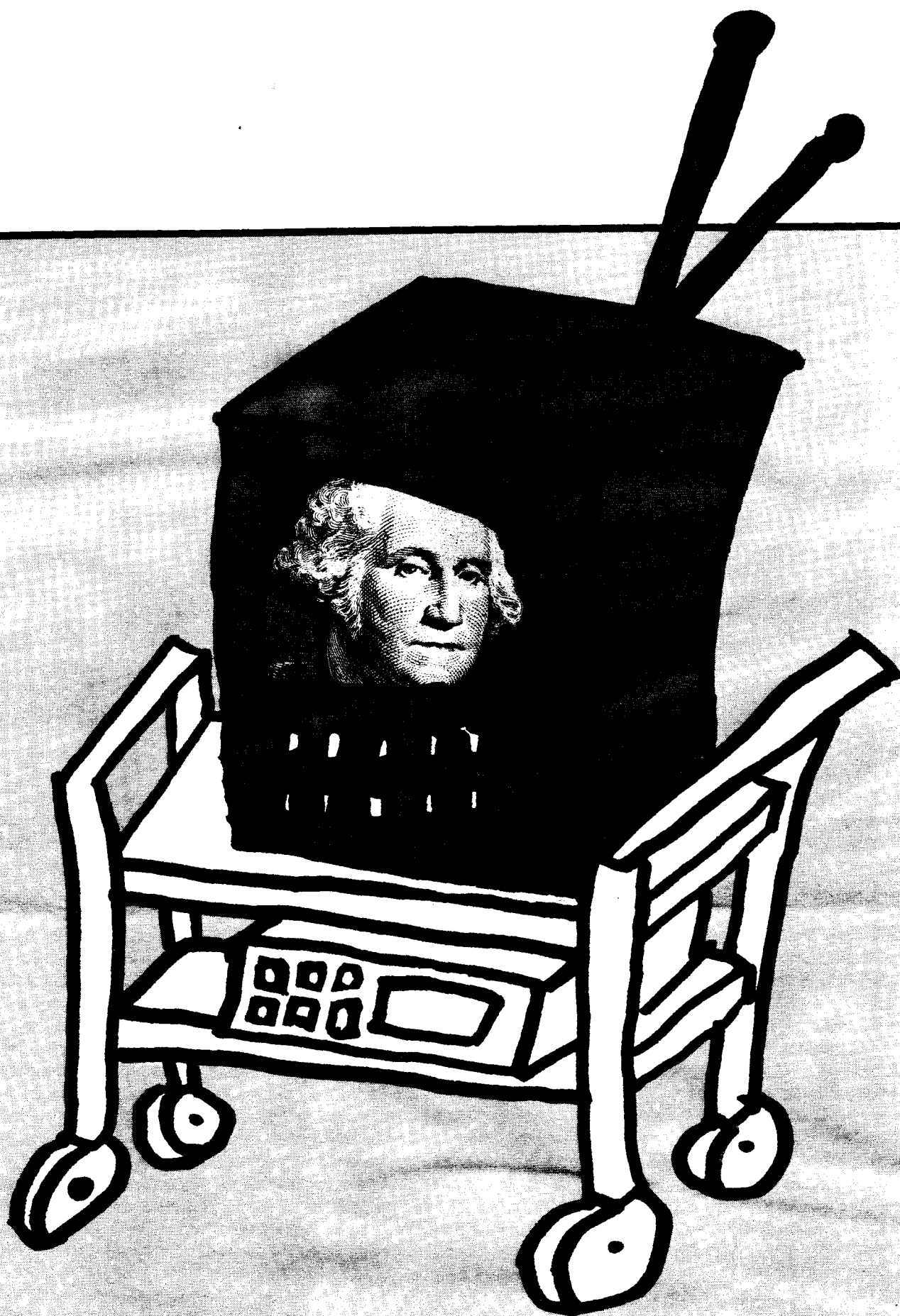
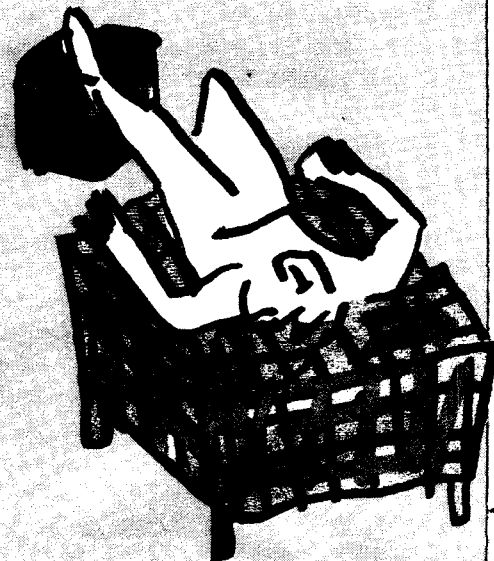


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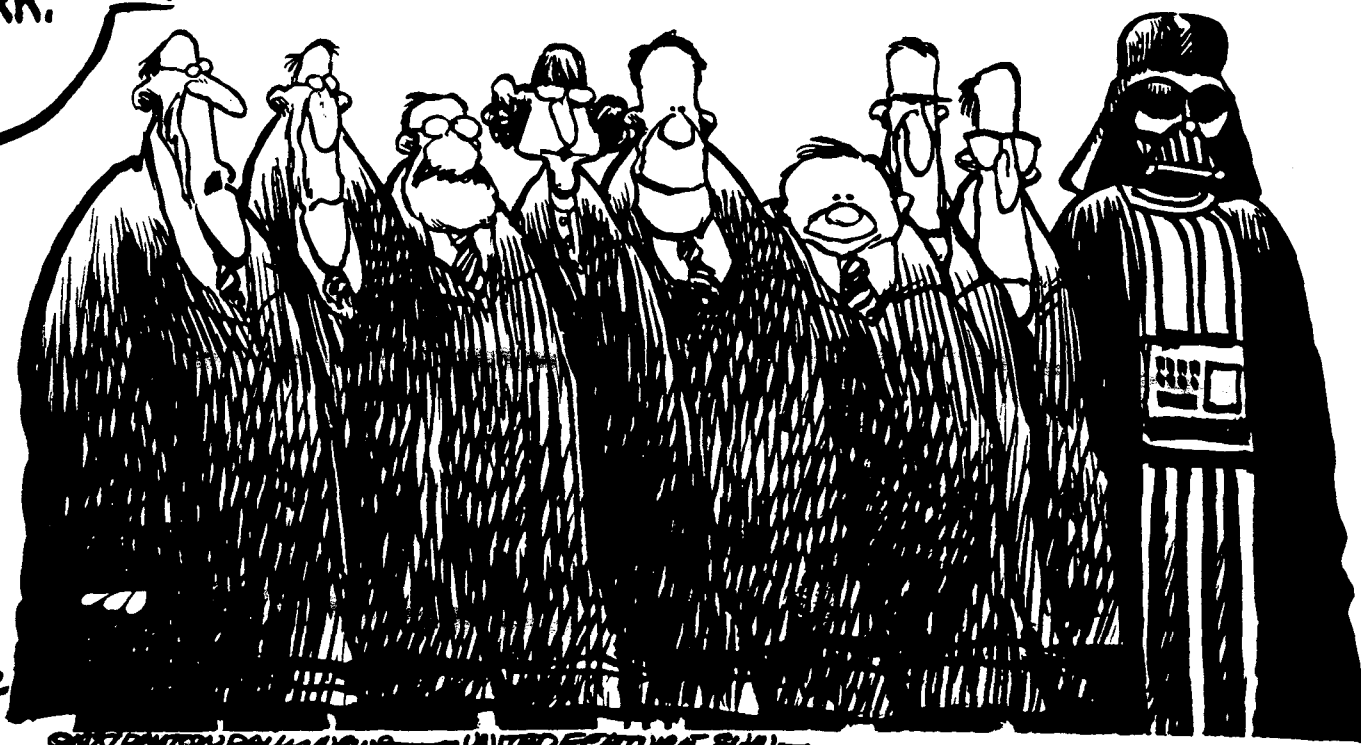
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GOOD
LUCK,
MR. BORK.



51ST EDITION DALLAS NEWS — UNITED FEATURES 5111 —

Bork's nomination and Supreme Court politics

The nomination of Robert H. Bork to a seat on the Supreme Court threatens to extend the discredited Reagan administration's term indefinitely. If Bork is allowed by the Senate to take his seat on the court, the most retrograde positions of the New Right—positions that Reagan has been unable to win in Congress or the courts during his time in the White House—may prevail. And not only for the remainder of Reagan's years in office, but for the lifetime of a new court majority.

In recent years a series of cases—on free speech, affirmative action, abortion, gay rights and separation of church and state—have been decided by 5-4 votes of the court. And a series of new cases are now on their way up for review. With Bork sitting, all these stand to be reversed to the detriment of working people, women, blacks and gays.

Right-wing ideologue: Bork's defenders say he is a brilliant legal scholar and that his views on these issues are determined by constitutional principles he holds dear. But a recent study by the editors of the *Columbia Law Review* found "an apparent inconsistent application of judicial restraint" by Bork: He consistently favored business challenges to federal regulations, but regularly supported the government in suits brought by public interest groups. And Ronald Dworkin, writing in the *New York Review of Books*, concludes that Bork's shifts on legal theory are not the result of evolving views on legal philosophy, but rather that "his principles adjust themselves to the prejudices of the right, however inconsistent these might be."

Conservatives now argue that as a matter of constitutional principle, the president's choice for the court should be honored as long as there is no question about technical qualifications. But this "principle" is shaped for the moment. For while the president should have a right to have his cabinet approved by the Senate—they being a part of his administration—judges are a different story. The courts make up a third branch of government under our Constitution, and are supposed to be as independent of the executive as of the legislature. The Constitution gives the Senate the right to share in their selection precisely to assure that this be so.

And from the earliest days of the republic, it has been. The Senate has rejected presidential nominees to the Supreme Court some 27 times, at least nine of which were for clearly political reasons. The first of these occurred in 1795, when John Rutledge, President George Washington's nominee for chief justice, was rejected by a vote of 14-10 because he had attacked the recently ratified Jay Treaty with England. Three of the "no" votes were cast by signers of the

Constitution. Similarly, in 1930 the Senate turned down President Herbert Hoover's nomination of Chief Justice John Parker of North Carolina because of his rulings against unions and his statements against blacks. And in 1968 a Republican Senate forced President Lyndon B. Johnson to withdraw the nomination of Abe Fortas for chief justice because conservative senators did not like his views on law enforcement, free speech, obscenity, capital punishment and other issues.

Political, as usual: Like its nominees, the court itself has always been political. And, ironically, until the post-World War II years, it was the left that complained about what Bork calls "judicial imperialism." In 1932, Louis Boudin, a socialist and legal scholar published *Government by Judiciary*, a two-volume history of judicial review. Ever since 1803, when in *Marbury vs. Madison* the court first declared a law unconstitutional, Boudin wrote, "Every popular, democratic or progressive movement...has had an anti-judicial point."

Decisions of the court were the subject of political battles over slavery, the income tax and many other issues in which the court consistently made or overthrew law for the benefit of the ruling elite. The political nature of the court became clearest when that elite was divided, as it was after the Civil War on the issue of paper money as legal tender. Enacted as a wartime measure in 1862, Congress had made paper currency legal as payment for all debts for the first time. This new law was opposed by the banks, mortgagees and other creditors, who demanded payment in gold. It was supported by the railroads—then the major industry in the nation—and mortgagors and other debtors who hoped to pay debts, contracted before the war in gold, with a depreciated legal tender currency.

In a series of decisions on this issue, the court first ruled in 1870 that paper currency was unconstitutional. That decision was reversed in 1871 after the court's membership was increased from seven members to its current size of nine, and after President Ulysses S. Grant appointed two new Republican members, thereby converting a 4-3 majority against legal tender to a 5-4 majority for paper money.

Nor is that example unique. A similar situation existed during the '30s, when Franklin D. Roosevelt, enraged at the Supreme Court's consistent striking down of New Deal legislation, attempted once again to increase the size of the Court—so that he could appoint friendly new judges. That attempt failed, but the court got the message and started to uphold the liberal legislation of the period.

In short, the court has always been implicitly or explicitly political. Judges and decisions have always been the subject of politics. And that's how it should be. The country is now faced with the prospects of a man whose politics are far to the right even of mainstream Republicans. It is not only proper but essential that his nomination be defeated.

LETTERS

Bork

WITH THE IMPENDING ELEVATION OF JUDGE Robert Bork to the Supreme Court, I thought your readers might like to know what lies behind what is being paraded as his one liberal credential, to wit his defense of freedom of the press in the *Ollman vs. Evans and Novak* libel case (1984). In his opinion, he says, "those who place themselves in a political arena must accept a degree of derogation that others need not." His chief evidence that I was too political a person to bring a libel suit was that I had run for office in the American Political Science Association and that I had invented a board game, "Class Struggle," whose political character he proceeded to describe in unloving detail. This, you will remember, was at a time when Generals Westmoreland and Sharon were not considered too political to have major libel suits before the courts. Justice Scalia, who was also on the Court of Appeals, voted for me, saying that I had been the victim of a "cool and classic case of libel." He treated Bork's arguments as not only wrong but ridiculous.

Bork is not a defender of freedom of the press. The truth is he doesn't believe that the rule of law (the libel law in this case) should apply to Marxists, and he doesn't mind clothing this repressive view in the language of freedom of the press, especially if he can help in the process two such pillars of the Washington establishment as Evans and Novak. Some liberal credential. How ironic that this man should be presented as a supporter of a "vigorous marketplace in political ideas" (his phrase) when what he was actually supporting was the right of two powerful conservative columnists to libel a Marxist professor in order to keep him from participating in this marketplace.

Bertell Ollman
Canberra, Australia

Immigrant testing

I AM SHOCKED BY YOUR NOTE IN REPLY TO THREE letters (*ITT*, July 8) protesting the editorial on AIDS testing. That you would be so quick to agree with the conservative AMA is itself cause for dismay, but that you would endorse the exclusion of immigrants based on HIV sero-positivity is unconscionable. The still current exclusion of immigrants with easily curable venereal diseases, which you cite as precedent, can only be explained by the continued application of archaic moral codes. Why not give them a shot of penicillin and admit them? HIV infection is a different matter entirely.

Excluding these people could mean denying them advanced medical treatment or simply the life they want in the face of the possibility that it may be cut short. A reasonable INS policy would be to require educating all immigrants about AIDS. As a gay man with a lover who is both seropositive and a foreigner, I can testify to the personal devastation that can result from the discriminatory measures you favor. As is often the case, the left's vision blurs when issues important to gay people are involved. Of course, AIDS is not a gay disease, but the people suffering from it—are predominantly gay men. We are also the community that has dealt responsibly with this epidemic from the very beginning. We

changed our sexual habits without the "help" of testing. Why don't you ask us what to do?

Cancel my subscription.

Name withheld on request
New York

Goetz

I AM WRITING IN RESPONSE TO SALIM MUWAKKIL'S article on the Goetz decision (*ITT*, July 8).

While I deplore the Goetz decision, while I passionately support all public policy which provides decent employment, adequate housing and other social services to the black community; nevertheless, I cannot condone the actions of black youths who, as victims of racist society, vent their rage in acts of violence toward innocent civilians.

Muwakkil implied that the Goetz jury was biased because one-third of the jurors had been crime victims and several others had friends and family members who were victims. Recently, when I served jury duty in Manhattan, I discovered that not only I, but at least one-third of those being reviewed for jury duty in several different court cases were crime victims. In other words, I believe the Goetz jury composition was representative of the percentage of people in Manhattan who have been victims of crime. These people include whites, blacks, men, women, young and old. Perhaps this fact goes to explain what Muwakkil reports but does not give a reason for: that many black citizens also supported Goetz' acquittal.

Racism continues to be a big problem in Manhattan; but so is street crime. As long as the left takes up one issue and not the other, the right will continue to manipulate the justified fears of many to maintain a politics of racial repression.

Connie Benson
New York

Cuban prisoners

FROM THE BAYOUS OF LOUISIANA: I AM A Catholic priest serving a nine-month sentence at the Federal Detention Center in Oakdale, La., for protesting the training of contras at Hurlbut Field in Florida.

The place is called an "alien detention center" but actually it's a high-security prison with a double 12-foot-high razor-wire fence that's patrolled by guards with shotguns.

Oakdale is home for 1,000 Cuban and 60 U.S. inmates. The Cubans were among the 125,000 Cuban refugees that came to the U.S. in 1980 aboard the "Mariel Freedom Flotilla." They were imprisoned for committing crimes after their arrival.

Having worked in Latin America I speak

Spanish and this has enabled me to get to know many of the Cuban inmates. Everyone in prison has his own unique story to tell, his struggle to share. The Cubans, however, have one thing in common. They have all completed their sentences some years ago, yet remain in prison. Because they are "undocumented aliens" and cannot return to Cuba, the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) has decided to detain them indefinitely.

Most of the Cubans at Oakdale had sentences ranging from six months to two years but have been locked up for four years and more. Some, like Francisco, have never been to court or sentenced.

Francisco is 69 years old. He took a taxi cab and couldn't pay the \$7.00 fare. He was driven to the local police station where he spent 15 days. When his name appeared on the computer as one of the Cuban refugees arriving in 1980, he was sent to the maximum security Federal Penitentiary in Atlanta, Ga., where he spent two years. Three months ago Francisco was transferred to Oakdale. And like all of the Cubans here, he has no idea when he will be released. Francisco told me he will never set foot in a cab again.

Because of the despair, frustration and anger there are daily outbreaks of violence at Oakdale. This week six of us were asked by the prison psychiatrist to stand a "suicide watch" for one of the Cubans who tried to hang himself. He was the second to try to take his life in the past two weeks.

The prison staff has responded to the increase of violence and growing unrest by adding more razor-wire to the fences and conducting more body searches.

The situation at Oakdale is getting more volatile each day. As an inmate serving time for speaking out against the injustice of our foreign policy in Nicaragua, I cannot remain silent about the injustice being done to our Cuban brothers in Louisiana.

A letter to INS, 425 I St. NW, Washington, DC 20536 can help the Cubans gain their freedom and perhaps save a life.

(Rev.) Roy Bourgeois, M.M.
#01579-017
Federal Detention Center
Oakdale, La.

Paul Robeson

ERIC LOTT'S CARELESS REVIEW OF GARY GID-Edins' *Celebrating Bird* (*ITT*, July 8) casts Paul Robeson as a "CPer" after characterizing the Communists as possessing only a "cultural non-program." It further holds that Robeson embodies the "considerable lamenesses of folkie internationalism." Readers wishing to appreciate how shallow such at-

tempts to type and reduce Robeson are should read Sterling Stuckey's excellent essay on Robeson's contributions to black nationalist thought in Stuckey's *Slave Culture*.

The incident in which Charlie Parker took a glass of water onto stage as Robeson sang "Water Boy" at a 1952 benefit concert for the defense of black Communist Ben Davis is indeed a funny and instructive one. But to appreciate Parker's joke does not require caricaturing Robeson or assuming that Robeson himself might not have fought back a grin. That both Bird and Robeson played the concert at the height of the Cold War suggests what should be obvious: that the two were not so far apart as Lott supposes and that, within Afro-American traditions there are varieties of critical perspectives.

Dave Roediger
Columbia, Mo.

One reason to celebrate our U.S. Constitution

A RECENTLY POPULAR QUESTION FROM NAIVE Adupes of right-wing brainwashing is "How can Congress interfere with President Reagan's policies when he was given a mandate by the people to carry out his policies?" The answer shows the difference between the U.S. constitutional system as it should properly work (Congress doesn't always interfere enough, unfortunately) and the Nazi system in Germany of the late '30s and early '40s. Hitler, like Reagan, was very popular for a time, enabling the Nazis to carry out their policies with the horrible results that are now history. It is no coincidence that since World War II ended, ex-Nazis have often been well regarded by both North and South Americans with a right-wing bias, using "anti-communism" as the reason.

This should also serve as a warning of the possibly dangerous results that could ensue from any future constitutional convention that would give fanatics an opening to tinker with our constitutional system.

Gordon C. Blaha
Cincinnati, Ohio

Editor's note: Please try to keep letters under 250 words in length. Otherwise we may have to make drastic cuts, which may change what you want to say. Also, if possible, please type and double-space letter—or at least write clearly and with wide margins.

SYLVIA

How to
recognize
Maturity



GROWN-UPS NEVER
ATTACH THEIR
FAVORITE POSTERS
TO THE WALL
WITH LITTLE
ROLLED UP PIECES
OF SCOTCH TAPE.

Nicole Hollander
©1987 by Nicole Hollander

DIALOGUE

The SANE-Freeze merger

By Don Shaffer

JOHAN JUDIS' ARTICLE ON THE MERGER OF SANE/Freeze (JTT, June 24) is misleading on what promises to be the most exciting and hopeful development in the U.S. peace movement in many years.

In November 1987, in Cleveland, at the merged organization's first convention, many hundreds of peace movement activists will represent the combined strength of a national organization and hundreds of local chapters, regional and state organizations. The organization will have a membership of around 200,000, a national full-time staff of more than 40 (in addition to a canvass staff of more than 100), a national budget of \$6-7 million and, most importantly, a program focused on opposition not only to a particular weapons system, but to the war system as a whole.

We will be working for a plan of general and universal disarmament (nuclear and conventional) with special emphasis on nuclear weapons. We will focus on interventionism (Nicaragua, Libya, Grenada, Persian Gulf, etc.), on jobs for peace (economic conversion), on opposition to the draft, on substantial reductions from the \$300 billion military budget—in short, on all aspects of the system that builds support for militarism and war.

Judis should be proud and hopeful, not snide and negative, about this organizational and programmatic approach.

What are the facts?

• It is not true that SANE has not been counted in opposition to Star Wars. We have opposed Star Wars since its inception and have lobbied in opposition. We have actively supported the Dellums Amendment, even urged a total cutoff of funds, not just a reduction from Reagan's request.

• It is not true that Marcus Raskin (co-chair of SANE) advocates a reduction of political/lobby work. SANE has always emphasized a multiple track—(1) political/lobbying, electoral; (2) education, community organizing; and (3) mass demonstrations (with civil disobedience where appropriate). Raskin has recently proposed the development of a Peace Caucus in the Congress to further our political work. Mass organization has never been posed in opposition to but rather as an integral part of such work.

• It is not true that David Cortright, director of SANE for the past 10 years, was a draft resister. He was an active duty GI during Vietnam and a leading peace organizer inside the Army who received punitive treatment from the Army.

• It is not true that SANE has no local chapters. We have more than 60 and several state and regional organizations as well. But Freeze has more than a thousand chapters. The merger should bring locals together with a strong national organization. (As a matter of fact, in view of the merger SANE deliberately delayed a SANE board priority of 1986 for chapter development, in order to avoid the charge of "raiding" Freeze chapters.)

• It is not true that SANE is an ineffective political force. SANE PAC is unique among peace PACs in that it has a three-tier approach—cash for candidates, canvass staff and organizers in the field, and mobilization of SANE and other peace organization members in political races. In 1986 SANE PAC spent more than \$150,000 in congressional and Senate races. There were more than 40 paid organizers in the field who mobilized thousands of grassroots peace volunteers for progressive peace candidates.

SANE takes special pride in its early recognition of the movement for black political empowerment. We have engaged in joint activity with Jesse Jackson, supported Harold Washington, Mel King and many black congressional candidates all over the country.

We were the first peace organization to support and provide funds to Mike Espy (he received the largest contribution from us of any House candidate)—the first black to be elected to Congress from Mississippi since Reconstruction, and Faye Williams (a black woman candidate for Congress from Louisiana who lost by only 2 percent). Wouldn't it be wonderful if the 60 right-wing Southern Republicrats could be replaced by a new coalition of blacks and progressive whites in the South. (If money is available we hope to open an office in Atlanta.)

• SANE does have a policy of outreach—affirmative action toward women, blacks and Hispanics in staff and community organizations. We want closer relations with the trade union movement, with environmental groups, with religious and justice organizations. Our financial, organizational and membership support for Central American and South African issues were demonstrated again most recently on April 25

in Washington.

• It is not true that we have abandoned lobbying. On June 8-9 the Test Ban Caravan, with SANE and Freeze included, made significant lobby gains on nuclear issues. Over 1,200 well-trained and experienced citizen lobbyists met with 49 senators and more than 100 members of the House. Additional votes were picked up for the Test Ban Bill.

Unfortunately, our chief lobbyist resigned recently to take a job as a congressional staff aide. Almost immediately we hired one staff lobbyist and have now hired a second—very experienced in Washington matters and a former aide to Congressman John Conyers Jr. We will be hiring a third shortly.

• It is true that SANE has been successful in achieving a degree of fiscal integrity and solvency. Through its canvass, direct-mail program, phonathon, foundation and high donor appeals (as well as concerned financial management and modern budgeting techniques), we have been able (so far) to avoid the terrible financial crises that have caused the failure of so many other progressive organizations. Should that be a cause for criticism?

• It is true that the merger discussions which have gone on for 18 months have strained our resources, our time, energy and money. Differences as to program orientation, organizational concepts, personalities and "turf" arise in such a process, but we have attempted to settle our problems amicably and have worked together in a genuine spirit of openness and unity. We have done so out of respect for the greater good we are trying to serve—a more unified, stronger American peace movement. SANE/Freeze is aware of many organizational weaknesses and of the many things that should be done better, faster and more efficiently. We are aware of the tension between national and local organizational en-

ties, and between single-issue and multi-issue programs. We are self-critical and our entire leadership—officers, board, staff—are constantly evaluating and striving for improvement.

Two more issues deserve mention. The new president of SANE/Freeze, Rev. William Sloane Coffin, personifies this new unified peace organization—multi-issued, comprehensive in scope, broad in organizational character, and of many colors. The president will be a national media spokesperson, a political/congressional liaison, a contact to funders (both foundation and individuals), and an inspiration to our constituents who need an organizational form to which they can contribute more actively. Coffin will be able both to "convert the doubters and inspire the faithful."

Unfortunately, there are people who may be afraid of this new unified peace organization. They may be more comfortable with a single issue. They may have a vested interest in jobs or a position with other existing peace organizations. They may fear closer relationships with those sections of American society that are the primary victims of the war system—the poor, the blacks, the Hispanics. They may be tied ideologically and organizationally to the mainstream of the Democratic Party as distinct from its more progressive and populist wing. They may be disaffected former SANE or Freeze employees whose personal disappointments are getting in the way of sound political judgment. The list could go on and on.

But one thing is certain—Judis and *In These Times* should not be in that camp. The merger, if successful, will help move U.S. policy away from militarism and war and toward peace, disarmament and development.

Don Shaffer is treasurer of SANE, Inc., and chair of SANE PAC.

John B. Judis replies:

I WAS PROMPTED TO WRITE ABOUT SANE by misgivings about its recent past that were expressed to me by prominent and thoughtful arms control advocates who had no personal grudge to bear against the organization—indeed, who had lauded it to me in the past. They were concerned about inner turmoil at the organization and about a change in its political direction, the result of which has been that SANE had lost its effectiveness as a Capitol Hill lobby. I confirmed both these contentions through numerous interviews.

Except on Cortright's precise role in the '60s anti-war movement—significant and praiseworthy, in any case—I stand by the facts of my article. I never said that SANE did not oppose SDI, but that it had decided in September 1985 not to lobby for any of the prevailing Democratic alternatives to the administration's SDI request. Whether the decision was right or wrong, its effect was to remove SANE as a factor in the congressional debate.

I didn't mean to imply that the new organization, as conceived by Marcus Raskin, would ignore Congress, but that if it followed Raskin's prescriptions and SANE recent precedent, it would disdain the kind of lobbying that organizations like Citizens for Tax Justice or SANE had performed with

such success in the past. This is important. Lobbying is not just a matter of taking congressmen to lunch. It means bringing a legislator's constituents to bear upon a specific decision that the legislator has to make in Congress. It requires an organizational base in the legislator's state or district and sophisticated policy people in Washington who do not reject the kind of compromise that is endemic to Congress. It often focuses not on the like-minded members of a "caucus," but upon Democratic and Republican swing votes. This kind of lobbying is an essential complement to other kinds of political activity, and I see no indication in Shaffer's reply that SANE's attitude toward it is other than I characterized in my article.

Shaffer also doesn't speak (except in his invidious description of mainstream Democrats, *et al.*) to the differences about the organization's overall direction that I reported in the article. I reported that while some SANE leaders saw the new organization as a kind of comprehensive leftwing party, allied to left Democrats, some Freeze leaders believed that it should be non-partisan and retain a focus on arms issues. I believe this issue should be publicly discussed. The national groups that have best advanced their own cause over the last seven years—from People for the American Way to the Freeze—have done so precisely because they appeared to rise above political factions and partisanship.

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Follow the Money

Half choking amid the toxic fog caused by smoking guns introduced into the Iran/contra hearings, Rep. Les Aspin of Wisconsin advanced cautiously along the trail of truth on July 21, as Adm. Poindexter faced the increasingly incredulous committee.

"I have come to the conclusion," said Aspin, "that we're missing something—that there's got to be another source of funding for the contras." He then said he had made a spreadsheet of known funds going to the contras from congressionally approved sources, appropriated money, countries such as Saudi Arabia, private donations and the "diversions" or "residuals." The results, Aspin said, "are very interesting" since they show a big gap in funding. Whereas the contras had been getting by on \$3.4 million a month until February 1986, "then for the next eight months the money drops off precipitously and from all sources...you're talking about...less than \$3 million from all sources...for a total of an eight-month period."

Two obvious sources come to mind and to put the question on one of them Aspin would have had only to turn in his chair and address one of the committee's senior investigative staffers, Tom Polgar. Polgar would have told him smoothly that, according to the committee's investigation the CIA had most definitely not been giving secret funds to the contras. But then, that is what Polgar would have been likely to say, since Polgar was a career officer in the CIA, most notably in Saigon during the Vietnam War. The hiring of Polgar—pressed by Sen. Warren Rudman (R-NH)—made it plain from the start that the Iran/contra committee was going to be circumspect and ever mindful of the paramount importance of not looking more than a few inches beyond the end of its own nose.

Even so, Aspin could have then headed down the corridor to the two separate congressional hearings into allegations of contra drug smuggling. Here he could find an answer to this interesting question of how the contra leadership kept going, either in the field or in their other main sphere of operations—the real estate market in southern Florida.

The latest *New York Times*/CBS poll showed that contra aid is still opposed by 51 percent of all Americans, down somewhat from the days before the hearings became a contra-aid telethon. But as the Ollie craze subsides, an increasingly high profile to the drug/contra connection could erode the chances of the next contra military aid package going through Congress this fall. The way things are at the moment, enough Democrats will vote for it unless given an unimpeachable reason not to. Killing Nicaraguan civilians is not regarded as sufficient cause for these swing Democrats to withhold funds.

Putsch plans

The disclosure that Col. Oliver North worked with the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) on a secret executive order to suspend the Constitution and run the country under martial law was received with considerable shock as evidence of a *putschist* mentality new in American history. The thing to remember is that the governing elites always tend to look on the dark side and to fear that the authority of the state rests on sand.

ASHES & DIAMONDS

By Alexander Cockburn

Among the emergencies against which North and FEMA urged martial law was domestic protest over a U.S. invasion of a foreign country, i.e. Nicaragua. Back at the time of the Vietnam War there were undoubtedly similar contingency plans. In 1967 Defense Secretary Robert McNamara was already gloomily warning of immense domestic unrest and the need to make major provision against it. Then, after the Tet offensive, the Joint Chiefs of Staff opposed the dispatch of 200,000 extra troops to Vietnam, arguing that they would be needed in the U.S. to quell insurgency on the home front and maintain law and order. The fact that these troops were withheld from Vietnam is one of the great achievements of the antiwar movement.

Drug test at ABC

On July 9 Capital Cities/ABC alerted all its employees in a memorandum from the company's top executives, Tom Murphy and Dan Burke, that as of late August of this year all final candidates for full-time employment would be asked to pass a drug test. Anyone failing that test would be considered unsuitable for employment for six months thereafter.

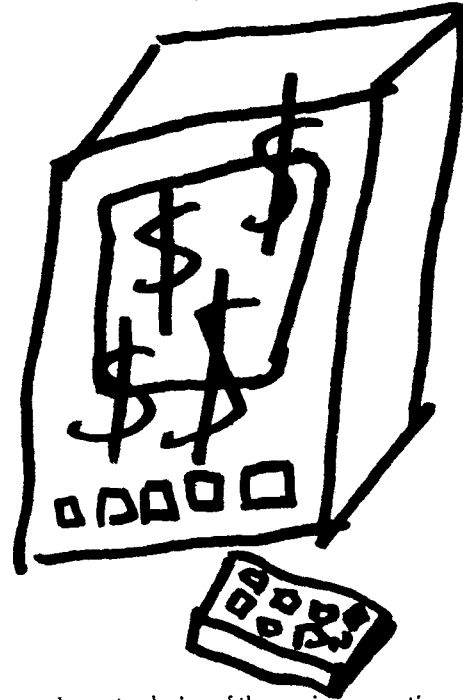
A three-page addendum addressed itself to some obvious questions. The test will screen for marijuana, cocaine, opiates such as heroin and codeine, benzodiazepines such as valium and librium, barbiturates, PCP, amphetamines and quaaludes. The testing process will be two-stage, with a positive first result confirmed by the gas chromatography/mass spectrometry process. Murphy and Burke note carefully that "nearly 40 percent of the Fortune 500 companies have instituted pre-employment testing," and say that in the case of Capital Cities/ABC "the subject of drug abuse has been important to us as a company and we have had an anti-drug policy in effect since 1984...in response to several unfortunate incidents involving drug use on company property.... We have intensified our education and rehabilitation program for existing employees [who will—as yet—not have to submit to the testing program, A.C.]... Nevertheless, we know we are often not reaching everyone who needs help because the denial factor is so strong with drug abusers."

"This fact is made more apparent by the results obtained by another major media company that began pre-employment testing over a year ago. Though their policy was known and understood by all applications, 17 percent failed the drug screen. Our testing process will help us by not hiring additional drug users while we're trying to aid current employees who need help."

As someone at one of the Capitol Cities/ABC subsidiaries remarked to me, "This all seems an invasion of privacy. How would such a test help workers currently employed here? By screening out people who smoked marijuana at a party days before their job interview or people who took valium from a friend to calm down at an exceptionally stressful time? How about high-salaried executives here who can best afford certain controlled substances like cocaine? What about the greatest hypocrisy of all—the abuse of alcohol and cigarettes which is a far greater threat to the health of much larger percentages of Cap Cities/

ABC workers than any of the substances mentioned in this memo?"

Another thing the testing program won't help is the fanatical addiction of Cap Cities/ABC owners and executives to the drug called "money." Features of "money addiction" include an irresistible urge to shovel shit on a nightly basis into the face of the American viewer in order to increase advertising revenue and thus earn more profits which can then justify increasing the al-



ready vast salaries of the senior executives. The Shoopley-Hartheim "money addict profile" includes hyperventilation on a seasonal basis around the time of the quarterly earnings report, progressive dilatation of the cerebral shame suppressors, absence of all emotions of taste, humanity and compassion. Professor Shoopley notes that "money addiction is a marked feature of late capitalism, in which the act of accumulation subsumes all other indices of achievement."

Footnote: On this topic of accumulation, we should note that last week Westwood One said it had signed a letter of intent to acquire NBC's radio networks for \$50 million and warrants to buy one million Westwood One common shares at a total price of \$36.4 million. Westwood One already owns Mutual Broadcasting System which it bought from the ultra-conservative Amway Corp. in 1985 and will, with the acquisition of NBC's radio networks, increase its share of revenue in the nation's radio

markets from 15 percent to 25-30 percent, making it number two behind ABC.

So is anyone in any regulatory capacity going to ask any pertinent questions about Westwood One, such as who runs it, the degree of their money addiction and whether they have been tested recently for any signs of interest in the well-being of the American citizenry whose airwaves are thus once again being used for private gain? No, of course not.

Madman

In the old days newspaper tycoons were a ghastly lot, but at least more colorful in their eccentricities than the present gang, who spend half their time talking to stock analysts on Wall Street and the other half answering letters from Phyllis Schlafly and Reed Irvine. It's a measure of how dull things have got that probably the most colorful major newspaper executive is the unalluring Allen Neuharth, chairman of the Gannett chain and, with an annual salary of about \$1.3 million, a confirmed money addict.

The Gannett chain is mostly made up of small boring papers—about 90—in monopoly situations, specializing in the "local news" that is Neuharth's recipe for keeping advertisers happy and readers undisturbed by intimations of the dangerous world that lies beyond the county line. To cap a career dedicated to mediocrity Neuharth founded *USA Today*, hurling money at the project in a desperate attempt to keep it afloat since its launch in 1982. *USA Today* is now supposedly on a sound footing and Neuharth spends some of his time trundling around the country in a sumptuously appointed bus, keeping his finger on the American pulse.

When it looked as though *USA Today* might fail, Neuharth summoned top managers to his home, called "The Pumpkin Center" in Coco Beach, Fla. He told them costs had to be cut and advertising and circulation improved if the paper was going to make it. After this urgent homily Neuharth invited the executives to join him in a "Last Supper." The dining room was laid out with Manischewitz wine and unleavened bread and Neuharth stepped from behind a curtain wearing a crown of thorns. He stood in front of a wooden cross and intoned, "I am the crucified one." Then he told the gape-mouthed audience that they would all be "passed over" if *USA Today* failed. For further details about Neuharth and *USA Today* consult *The Making of McPaper* by Peter Prichard.

STALIN: Man of Contradiction

Kenneth Neill Cameron

A new look at the man who shaped the Soviet Union and modern history in critical ways, this book is a sympathetic but not uncritical treatment of Stalin's thinking. "Such a book, restoring balance in our judgement of this important figure, is a valuable contribution to efforts to come to terms with the great controversies of our times." William Ash

Cameron, a Rhodes Scholar, is a renowned expert on Shelley and on Marxist theory. He is also the author of *Humanity and Society: A World History*; and *Marxism, The Science of Society: An Introduction*.

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By Pat Aufderheide

Tip-toeing between the Party line and the bottom line

H E'S A MID-LEVEL SOVIET BU-reaucrat in the (ahem) Department of Leisure Time, grappling with *glasnost* (openness; discussion) and *perestroika* (reconstruction; structural change). His department's problem: Just how far can the people be trusted with their free time? His problem: Just how much can he say and still get the top job once the Old Stalinist leaves his department? And these questions are only a piece of the hero's dilemma in Eldar Ryazanov's *Melody for a Forgotten Flute*, a wry comedy that opened the 15th Moscow Film Festival in July.

There's also the girl. She's the public health nurse next door, the soul of proletarian purity and honesty. Their love affair's neuroticism has a sobering allegorical meaning. Is true union possible between the bureaucrat and the prole? The film, made with canny humor and a cocked eye toward the conflicts of the *glasnost* era, offers no easy answers.

And it sat uncomfortably with the packed audience opening night in Moscow. A third of the viewers were officials already worn out from a day on the front lines of *perestroika*; another large portion were international reporters, critics and film industry reps with high



Soviet cinema struggles to regain its vitality.

expectations for a resurgent Soviet cinema. If officials were bound to distrust the film's sharp and critical allegory, many international types were disappointed by a film style firmly anchored in international narrative traditions. And some in

the audience were pondering the simple question: Will it sell?

High-gloss glasnost: *Melody for a Forgotten Flute* was an excellent choice to begin the biannual festival, which traditionally showcases the glossier productions of

socialist countries, balanced by re-treads and almost-rans from Western cinema and a best-of Third World sampler. But in this debut year for the post-*glasnost* industry, the focus was the struggle of Soviet cinema to regain its vitality.

In the '20s and early '30s, Soviet cinema was perhaps the world's most exciting. Formally radical and politically engaged, the cinematic experiments of filmmakers like Eisenstein, Vertov and Dovzhenko asserted that cinema was a unique new art, and a powerful tool to shape a revolutionary culture. By 1928, the poet Mayakovsky rumbled about the new state film industry, "Sovkino is a monopoly and it's bound to become even more of a monopoly—so that if Sovkino won't encourage experiment everything we've gained will fade away."

Our critic comes back from the USSR.

They point to Eisenstein and to Shub to show you how mistaken your fears are. These directors are our cinematic pride, but they became that in spite of Sovkino." Mayakovsky's fears proved correct, as Soviet film gradually became one of the largest and most tediously predictable of world cinemas.

There have been waves of aesthetic and political resurgence, notably in the generation of the "thaw," after 1956. And there has been a descant theme of lyrical, emotional and surrealist work by Russian filmmakers such as Andrei

Kommissar: a woman warrior comes off the shelf at Moscow Film Festival

"*Glasnost* means every voice should be heard. For 20 years ago I made a film about a human cancer, that of chauvinism, the forces of chauvinism in our society still prevent the showing of this film. Such silence undermines *glasnost*. I demand that the film be seen in this year."

Filmmaker Alexander Askoldov had broken into a press conference at the Filmmakers Union with his request, which was soon taken up by festival guests curious to see a film that remained on a shelf supposedly stripped bare. Union organizers rushed to program a screening of *Kommissar*, and two nights later a 20-year-old drama was presented to a packed audience. Leading lights of Moscow's artistic community attended, including poet Evgeny Yevtushenko, who had personally taken the case for the film's release to Gorbachev.

In a boldly affecting (and occasionally forced) lyrical, the black-and-white film tells the story of a fierce female commander during the Civil War, who becomes pregnant. The Red Army helps her with a local Jewish family, which takes her into their crowded home. The contrast between the comman-

der's self-sacrificial valor and the family's warm generosity is as stark as the conflict between the need to struggle and the need to love. The performances by leading Soviet actors, several present in the audience, drew rapturous ovations from the festival crowd.

The film has been shelved despite repeated attempts over the years to renegotiate its release. Askoldov himself was prohibited from filmmaking as "professionally unfit" left to make his living first in theater and then in variety shows.

Kommissar capitulation? The post-*glasnost* campaign to release *Kommissar* has been in force, as registered in a March article praising the film in the French Communist Party newspaper *L'Humanite* and an article by a leading literary critic similarly heralding it in the English-language *Moscow News*. Resistance has been equally fierce. Editors of the Russian-language *Soviet Culture* cut a favorable reference to it after showing the article's author galleries in which the reference was preserved.

Why was this film banned? Was it the film's positive focus on the Jewish family? Its portrayal of the commander as a

tragic figure, torn between motherhood and military life? Was it an ending sequence that realistically flash-forwarded to a vision of Nazi concentration camps? Was it the Jewish father's speech celebrating a humanism of the heart? Was it the use of "The Internationale" to end a film that transcends a purely political internationalism?

At the press conference following, lead actor Rolan Bykov (now a leader in the Filmmakers Union as well as a major screen actor) said, "Over the last few months, I've been very happy for many of my friends, but I haven't been able to look into Askoldov's eyes. I've asked one of those involved in blocking this film why it was still banned, and he just looked at me and said, 'I don't remember.' Someone suggested, 'Maybe they're trying to figure out why they banned it in the first place.'"

Askoldov wants several scenes and subplots restored from this cut print. It's unclear whether the footage still exists, and who will pay for the restoration. There are other questions as well, such as the film's release in the Soviet Union. Rumor (and rumor is typically as hard as in-

formation gets on subjects like this) has it that a minimal domestic release, say of 15 to 40 prints, is planned.

No easy answers: And then there is the question of the film's international impact not only as a powerfully affecting personal drama but also as a banned film that focuses on Jews. Askoldov himself is alarmed by the notion that the film might be used as a tool of anti-Soviet propaganda. "I didn't want to make that easy on about the good Jewish family. I don't want it to be seen as 'Russia suppressing the Jews,'" he said.

"I wanted to focus on something that's never been addressed, the relationship between the Bolsheviks and the Jews. You can settle this question with propaganda—you know how you do it in the U.S., and we do it here, too. But that's a one-sided defensive answer, and really no answer at all. This problem has roots that go far deeper than the October Revolution. I wanted to make a general statement about a worldwide tragedy of chauvinism, to express my love to people of all kinds, to assert the absolutely equal right to happiness."

And it isn't just a story about

this Jewish family. The commissar is a distillation of Russian character, and an emblem of the fate of the woman soldier in war. She's a loving human being with high moral standards caught in cruel necessity. And there's a parallel between her attitudes and those of some political and military leaders. They love in the abstract; to love a concrete person is different.

"The material for the film is the first years of our revolution. Its first word was 'internationalism,' promising peace and happiness for all. Later we lost sight of some of the Revolution's greatest achievements. That's why we began *perestroika* [reconstruction], which brings us back to the moral basis of our revolution."

"But let's not forget that *perestroika* in practice is a bloody struggle. Look what happened to this film, hidden for 20 years."

After a tense furor created around the film, *Kommissar* appears likely to be released both domestically and internationally. During the festival tentative international deals were being cut, both for theatrical release and television in the West. *Kommissar* is a test of *glasnost* on the international screen. P.A.

Tarkovsky and Sergei Paradjanov. But in the last 20 years you'd be hard pressed to find a trace of creative energy from international showings licensed through the state agency Sovexportfilm. A rigidly organized state company, Goskino, has protected the worst tendencies of state-approved culture, both in form and message. Films that bucked the standard have been shelved. Filmmakers who have persisted in unorthodox habits, and who have not left the country, have had budgets slashed, scripts rejected, faced charges of being "professionally unfit" or even jailed.

Box-office boondoggles: All that began to change last year, when, encouraged by Gorbachov's *glasnost* policy, criticism of the film industry began to surface (except, of course, in film magazines). The film industry's cost accounting was exposed, revealing that box office from foreign films was floating the industry. Second-rate imports were usually cheaper (major films by artists such as Fellini and Kurosawa had never been shown), while international films by Russian artists such as Tarkovsky and by Czech emigré Milos Forman had never been screened or shown to minuscule "art" audiences, presumably for political reasons.

A few Soviet films, such as *Moscow Does Not Believe in Tears* (an all-time box office hit) and the action-adventure thriller *Pirates of the 20th Century* (one of three films dubbed "Soviet Rambos" for their crude action plots featuring U.S. villains), made a lot of money. But the majority of Soviet releases were financial catastrophes. Dreary social-realist epics like *Red Bells*—the interminable tale of John Reed made by old-guard director Sergei Bondarchuk—kept spectators away in droves, but still showed up glowingly on the books.

"It's as if our release system had been designed by the CIA to sabotage our culture," says Victor Dyomin, the outrageous film critic who for 20 years had his harsh opinions on cinema squelched, and is now a secretary of the Film Union. "We discovered that half our films shouldn't be made, and the other half shouldn't be seen. Who and what were we making films for?"

At the 5th Congress of the Filmmakers Union last May, with pressure from Gorbachov himself, director Elem Klimov (*Agonia, Farewell*) was elected head of the union. Filmmakers have since been among the most aggressive in the intellectual community that Gorbachov depends on to steer *glasnost* and *perestroika* free of the bureaucratic ice. A feisty new union board quickly challenged the union's old guard, Goskino and Sovexportfilm.

Hidden treasures: You could see the result instantly on the screens. Films shelved for up to 25 years have been released domesti-



The award-winning, long-suppressed Soviet drama: *Theme*.

cally and internationally, including Tengiz Abuladze's 1984 *Repentance*, an allegory of Stalinism that almost won the Cannes Film Festival award this year and set box office records within the Soviet Union; and the superb dramatic feature *Theme*, made in 1979 by Gleb Panfilov and winner of the Berlin Film Festival's top award. Alexei Guerman's complex character studies, distinguished by an evocative and individual camera

style and an unwavering respect for their central characters, such as *My Friend Ivan Lapshin* and *Twenty Days without War*, were finally seen last year in international festivals and within the Soviet Union.

Just as astonishing as the discovery of hidden treasures on the shelves was the fact that they'd been made at all. Each such film comes with a pedigree of struggle and ingenuity on the part of filmmakers. *Repentance*, for in-

stance, was made in the relatively liberal Georgia studio, with money funnelled through the republic's TV service to avoid script censorship.

Production is now undergoing overhaul as well. The different studios—at least one in each republic—are no longer administered by people who made their mark in administration running furniture factories, but by filmmakers elected by their peers. Projects are approved at the studio level. And

For whom will *The Bells of Chernobyl* screen?

A well-hidden treasure at the Moscow Film Festival was the superb and understated feature documentary *The Bells of Chernobyl*. Featuring footage of the dangerous task of clean-up by the military, interviews with evacuees, victims and relatives, discussions with medical and scientific researchers and a shockingly sober view of the devastation to the land—it may be the most powerful statement yet made on the cost of nuclear power.

Like the U.S. documentary on dioxin, *Secret Agent*, the film steers clear of blaming culprits; rather, it raises the question of responsibility for decisions that affect the future of the planet.

"When we first arrived," said scriptwriter Vladimir Sinelnikov, "we thought our primary question was to find those who were responsible. But we came to see—and this has been especially clear since I've returned to make a second film about the trial—that that's not the main thing."

"It's the question of social responsibility among all the decision makers—scientists, technicians, biologists, planners. We still have not really understood what has happened. I look into

the eyes of the chief engineer and I see an insane person. He's not scared of his sentence, however grave it may be. He's insane because of the knowledge of what happened there. That's what's got to be made clear."

"It's a universal theme, I think—that's why the film has that title, which evokes Hemingway and John Donne."

And yet *The Bells of Chernobyl* was never shown in competition at the Moscow Film Festival and was seen by only a handful of the festival guests the day after the closing event. In competition instead was an entry called *Chernobyl: Chronicle of Hard Weeks*, which, in a version that suffered four rounds of cuts, is a paean to the Soviet army's clean-up.

Why was *The Bells of Chernobyl*, an excellent example of *glasnost*-era filmmaking, hidden in an exhibition corner? Berlin film festival head Moritz de Hadeln, who succeeded in showing the film last year, shrugged his shoulders. "It's obvious, isn't it?"

The showing at Berlin did not come easily, he explained. Its initial approval had run into snags, with official word that "the filmmakers wanted to edit

it again" belied by the fact that it had been shown at an international conference in Moscow. Finally pressure from Soviet ambassadors in both East and West Berlin—who argued that holding it up would be bad publicity—apparently resulted in the film's arriving on the last day of the festival. "Since then, no festival has gotten the film—they're offered the other one instead," says de Hadeln, who believes that Soviet atomic energy officials were reluctant to see the film travel widely.

Sinelnikov demurs when asked about the problem. "I prefer to discuss artistic rather than administrative problems," he says. He does say, however, that to this day there is only one print of the film. "We have a general shortage of film stock in the Soviet Union," he explains. The film has been shown only in Moscow and in the Chernobyl area, where "the audience was so packed they were watching both sides of the screen." He hopes that Soviet TV, which has yet to air a Soviet film on the subject, will eventually show it. U.S. film festival planners are also putting it on their must-show list.

P.A.

film studios are going to be basically self-supporting—dependent on box-office revenues for their future.

The solution is the problem:

"We've solved problems," says Dyomin, now a secretary of the union. "And we've created three for every one we've solved. As Klimov said, 'It's the lifelong dream of the lunatic to run the asylum.' But we want to run it anyway."

This year the union undertook to change the tone of the festival, in a demonstration of *glasnost* as notable for its confusion as for its energy. Competition was streamlined, and a retrospective of the long-officially-ignored Tarkovsky programmed, showing among other things the restored three-hour version of *Andrei Rublov*. At the film market, long-banned films were suddenly proudly offered for sale, including the 1967 expressionist adventure-musical *Intervention*. Big-money purchases were made for international films such as Tarkovsky's *Sacrifice* and Forman's *Amadeus*. And the Film Union, a staid Harvard Club-like place, was turned by day into a screening hall for mostly-unreleased "Young Soviet Cinema" of the last decade, and by night into a discotheque.

The festival events displayed, warts and all, the conflict-filled process of liberating art within a state industry. The good news was that warehouses-full of red tape hadn't been enough to kill filmic experimentation, or the urge to use the screen to reveal the forbidden. The barrage of newer, often short films showed a wide range of styles and voices, ratifying the comments of one young director: "It's too soon to call this a generation. A generation, in any case, doesn't make art. Individuals do. You must take us each on our own." If that's a comment far from the dream of engaged artists at one with a revolutionary public, it's also a predictable response to two decades of creative suppression within a huge, entertainment-oriented film industry.

Symbol and scandal: Some of these aspiring film artists appear to have re-invented the feel of '60s U.S. independent cinema, such as early Cassavetes, using handheld cameras, the zoom lens and wandering narratives. A common theme is the alienation of Soviet youth culture—drugs, rock and the underground economy.

Others brandish their reverence for cinema as high art in a European sense and for film styles that, whatever else they do, boldly reject sober realism (with Tarkovsky everybody's aesthetic ancestor). Widely heralded by Soviet intellectuals is young Alexander Sokurov, six of whose symbol-laden films sat on the shelf until *glasnost*.

Social-issue documentary is staking a claim to Soviet screen time, led by *Is It Easy to Be Young?*, shocking for its frank interviews with young people, including soldiers re-

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turning confused from the war in Afghanistan. That film had attracted audiences nationwide, packing stadiums in continuous all-day showings in some cities. Likely to be equally controversial is veteran filmmaker Gerz Frank's *The Supreme Court*, an hour-long interview with a young man condemned to death in Riga for murdering his girlfriend; the film implicitly challenges the death penalty. Even Frank sounds surprised when he says, "Nobody put up obstacles to my making the film, and no one censored it." Ecological themes, including an exposé of a disastrous water project, and profile films of people who bucked the system were also proof of demand for a new openness. (And come November there will be a mini-retrospective of "Young Soviet Cinema" at New York's Museum of Modern Art.)

But structural problems remain. Goskino and import-export firm Sovexportfilm continue to hold decision-making power in such areas as approving a film for domestic release, deciding on the number of prints of a film (fewer prints means smaller circulation, and then mostly to art houses). These government agencies also control the authorization of films for foreign exhibition and the purchase of films for domestic distribution. Longstanding hostility between cinema and television has only been exacerbated by the turmoil of *glasnost*. Factions riddle the Filmmakers Union as well. The old guard hasn't, according to insiders, given ground and is hoarding every mistake of the new leadership. They have an audience, too: few members of the Central Committee dealing with culture have been changed.

Free to choose: Soviet filmmakers are used to bureaucratic infighting. What they're not used to is setting their own agenda. Scriptwriter Ramiz Fataliev, recently elected

head of a film studio, says with some acerbity, "The filmmakers used to stand in corners whispering about the conservative bureaucrats on top. Well, now people on top are demanding change from the film people."

"It's a revelation to people who used to complain they had no opportunity, to discover that they don't know what they want to do, that they can't produce that valuable thing they'd been kept from making."

Victor Dyomin, sitting at his side, takes the long view: "What we've got at the moment is a situation like the one where a parent buys a child a suit that's too big and expects the child to grow into it."

Growing into the suit will also be a challenge because of the studios' new dependence on box office proceeds. The divorce between "quality" cinema and "mass entertainment" has never been broader, and

With *glasnost*, "the problem of dull films is solved. The problem of commercial film is serious."

the definition of what's both family-fare and interesting filmmaking remains entirely unclear. Of course, even back in the days when Eisenstein was working on *The Battleship Potemkin*, Soviet mass audiences were flocking to watch Douglas Fairbanks and Mary Pickford at the movies. These days, too, vapid film spectacles are popular with Soviet audiences and are a major staple of the industry's foreign exchange.

A tour of one of the major film studios, Mosfilm, is a tip-off to the

continuing importance of circus-cinema. It's the Soviet equivalent of a Universal Studios tour, minus stuntmen and the tour of sound stages. Guests are greeted by sweetly singing child performers in folk costume, followed by horse-men on parade, corny folk dancers and an outdoor tea party offered by movie-gypsies. Clips of the latest Soviet entertainments display spectacles ranging from costume epics to fairy tales to action pictures.

Soviet filmmakers are perfectly aware of the clash between profitability and aesthetic experiment. On the one hand, the "petit Tarkovsky syndrome" could cripple an industry that intends to fuel artistic freedom with box office cash. As Dyomin puts it, "The problem of dull films is solved. The problem of commercial film is serious. And it will be very difficult to make 'genius' films. Yesterday it was possible to say, 'I'm a genius, let them suppress me.' Now, three geniuses could make three films and sink a studio."

On the other hand, you have to make some provision for films that won't attract broad audiences. Klimov told *In These Times* that, of the box office profits scheduled to go to the Filmmakers Union, some will be earmarked for special "quality" projects, to protect art from lowest-common-denominator commerce. The Union may restart a stalled animation film based on Gogol's *The Overcoat*, by Yuri Norstein, one of the most striking animation artists in the world. His feature project ran far over budget and was abandoned by the studio. Now the union may secure him another studio.

Official left: Most sturdily emerging from this first wave of celluloid *glasnost* is the kind of film that's being described among intellectuals as "official left." The

phrase, soaked with the accusation of opportunism, describes a predictable kind of social-issue drama. Examples dotted the festival, for instance the teen drama *The Next Day War Came*, which Sovexportfilm is heavily promoting. Begun pre-Gorbachov by young director Yuri Kara with the grim expectation that it would be shelved, it's now on its way to domestic release. Utterly conventional (with the irritating exception of switches from color to sepia to black-and-white depending on mood), it claims its post-*glasnost* status for its story line: a 1930s schoolgirl with a savagely Stalinist mother befriends the daughter of an intellectual who is seized by the authorities. The film carries a flavor of self-congratulation, as if in self-righteous condemnation of a safely-dead past.

Some find the same flavor in *Repentance*, an aesthetically vigorous film whose story carries both an indictment and a warning against the personality-cult leader. Fair or not, that kind of criticism is a symptom of steady pressure for aesthetic innovation.

Emerging pictures: What Soviet film will produce under *glasnost* is still to emerge. What's clear is that the floor is open for debate. Filmmakers at festival and union events seized their chance to raise long-risky issues before an international audience. For instance, Bako Sadikov, a Central Asian filmmaker, noted for his 10-minute political allegory *Adonis XIV* (which has been invited to the Telluride Film Festival), responded to a question on religion in films with a diatribe against repression of Islam in Central Asia. "How are we to understand the art, the architecture, the poetry of our region without understanding the force of Islam?" he said.

During another forum, a Soviet filmmaker criticized Politburo member Egor Ligachev for having cited by name a particular film as an example of the excesses of *glasnost*. This kind of finger-pointing made it far too easy, the speaker said, for overzealous officials to take harsh action against the film. "I can't recall when before I've heard open criticism of a Politburo member by name like that in these halls," said a film institute researcher.

Festival debates also ran onto the rocks at times. For instance, asked by Western journalists about the possibility of films about homosexuality, one young filmmaker explained, "This is a problem for the medical authorities, not for artists. Besides, I can't imagine who would be interested in a film about homosexuality. Certainly not me—I'm not homosexual!" Questions of Jewish culture and the refuseniks were neatly sidestepped in public discussion. And the difficulties women face in the Soviet film industry appeared to be as starkly clear to women filmmakers as they

seemed invisible to their male colleagues.

The enthusiasm of the "lunatics in charge of the asylum" is infectious—or at least that's the hope of many who are banking on *glasnost* opening doors to co-production projects, with twin goals of increased understanding and foreign exchange. The new American Soviet Film Initiative, formed last year during a Filmmakers Union tour of the U.S., was prominent at the festival announcing upcoming joint projects, and its joint U.S.-Soviet film crew was filming a documentary on mutual misperception through cinema there as well.

Let's make a deal: West Coast producers and directors brought both interest and skepticism to the festival. Stanley Kramer, accompanied by Columbia Pictures' David Putnam, was there to discuss a joint project dealing with Chernobyl. (Kramer is one of the best-loved American directors in the Soviet Union, valued for his "moral" cinema.) While Soviets called it a co-production, Kramer carefully called it a U.S. project "with Soviet cooperation." The difference reflects a sober wariness of Soviet follow-through, based on many U.S. producers' experience.

Some Soviet filmmakers expect great things of potential co-productions—like the filmmaker who wants to attract George Lucas' attention so he can make his planned science-fiction film with U.S. special effects. Given aging studios and chronic shortages of materials, Soviet filmmakers have every reason to try to make a deal.

But some worry about diluting a national artform as well. For instance, Elem Klimov raises his eyebrows at the example of Nikita Mikhalkov's latest film, *Dark Eyes*, starring Marcello Mastroianni; he was overheard calling it a "dollar store film." In a union forum, he argued that films depending on Western stars to garner international box office may contribute little to reconstructing Soviet cinema art. Klimov's concern with a "100 percent national cinema" spurred Stanley Kramer to deliver an impassioned speech: "Let's forget about internationalism in film—what's important is to touch the human heart." An uneasy silence followed. Of course, less surprising than the furious arguments over, and grandiose projections for, Soviet co-productions is the simple fact that such projects are even being discussed.

Lenin once said that "of all the arts, for us the cinema is the most important." The long years of tight control over production and distribution have been a backhanded acknowledgement of Lenin's observation. The excitement of *glasnost* on celluloid is intense; as one filmmaker said, "We're watching a return to the normal evolution of film art." But as Dyomin notes, "The happy ending has not yet been written for this script." ■

In the wake of *glasnost*, new Soviet films such as *Repentance* (below) address formerly taboo topics.



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Random House, 486 pp., \$22.50

By William Appleman Williams

The Realities of Empire. Or, as Ollie North said: "I lied to you in good faith."

FOR ALL ITS OCCASIONAL ARCHNESS, even its moments of rambling self-indulgence, this is a subtle and important book. It deals with issues that most other novelists (and historians) are reluctant to confront. In its own way, it is as challenging as the other volumes in what Vidal calls his biographical history of America (such as *Burr* and *Lincoln*).

We do need to enter into that dialogue. On the one hand, not so much with Vidal as with ourselves. On the other hand, Vidal talks straight about important matters, so it is perhaps true that we have to come to terms with Vidal if we are to do justice to ourselves. That is the power of the man. As with all the great ones. He has always annoyed us because he will not allow us to evade the issues.

Vidal is aware of the debate about writing history from "the bottom up" as opposed to doing it from "the top down." But he insists that, so defined, the choice is more than a bit misleading if not simplistic. He generally chooses to deal with the issue in terms of the nature, character, exercise and consequences of power. Hence he is concerned first of all with who defines the agenda, who establishes the

priorities within that framework, and who makes the final decisions. Vidal does not deny the inherent importance, or the concerns and influence, of farmers, workers, the middle class and other groups. But he does insist that, short of sustained militance in the name of a different and coherent conception of America, those elements of the social and political economy will be ruled from above. He is correct.

This intellectual strategy enables Vidal to integrate various themes into his analysis. Those include, in random order: how perceptions of reality compete with reality; how ideas can override economics; how the force of personality can distort both perceptions and reality; how newspapers (and TV and radio) define both reality and perceptions of reality; and the essentially conservative implications of women defining liberation and equality in terms of the example and practice of males in the corporate-imperial marketplace.

Vidal opens *Empire* in 1898 with a beautiful set piece involving a dialogue about imperialism among novelist Henry James, U.S. historians Brooks and Henry Adams, the quasi-fictional Caroline Sanford and Del Hay, the son of John Hay. America has just defeated Spain, and Brooks is declaiming on the necessity of empire and further war in Asia.

Now on to war to "secure us all Asia.... War is the natural state of man. But for what? For energy...." Europe in general, but now especially Russia, is the threat to America's domination of Asia's energy.

Henry James asks: "Is this—dare one ask?—a good thing?... What then are we given to, that is so immensely superior?"

Henry Adams replies: "We are given to Anglo-Saxon freedom and the common law and...."

"James spread his hands placat-

ingly. 'You speak of laws of history, and I am no lawyer. But I confess to misgivings. How can we, who cannot honestly govern ourselves, take up the task of governing others?'"

There you have it. Within 38 pages, Vidal has set the parameters: the perceived economic necessities of the capitalist system, the men of war (most certainly not classic warriors), an almost mindless definition of America in terms of Russia, idealism and a kind of demented love affair with the idea of inevitability before the fact.

Citizen Hearst: We subsequently watch Caroline Sanford recognizing William Randolph Hearst's ability to distort both reality and the perception of reality, and being attracted to the power inherent in all of that. She is erotically aroused by the persona and the prospects. Vidal's subtle knowing about sex and power.

At one point Secretary of State John Hay and Sen. Henry Cabot Lodge are discussing how best to read and act upon the ambiguous meaning of Rudyard Kipling's poem about *The White Man's Burden*. Lodge was all for the imperial interpretation, but Hay notes that "even the excellent Rudyard admits that we're in for trouble."

Suddenly William Jennings Bryan enters the dialogue. "Well, it can be read two ways.... And, all in all, I'd rather not have either way read today. We're having a hard enough time as it is."

Having demonstrated that Bryan was not silly, only irresolute, Vidal gives us a glimpse of the tension within Hearst. "Heaven forgive us, we let [the crooks] do business with the Four Hundred like everyone else who's respectable, so how can

I be too hard on an overworked police sergeant with ten children who asks for ten dollars a week from some saloon-keeper for a bit of protection?" Ah, so: the dilemmas of the world-reforming-capitalist.

And so on to Elihu Root, the man nobody (either of power or protest) wanted to be president. He was simply too tough and too honest. "Plainly," notes Vidal in a wry aside, "Root was a non-starter." Americans do not warm to leaders with the courage to resign over a matter of principle.

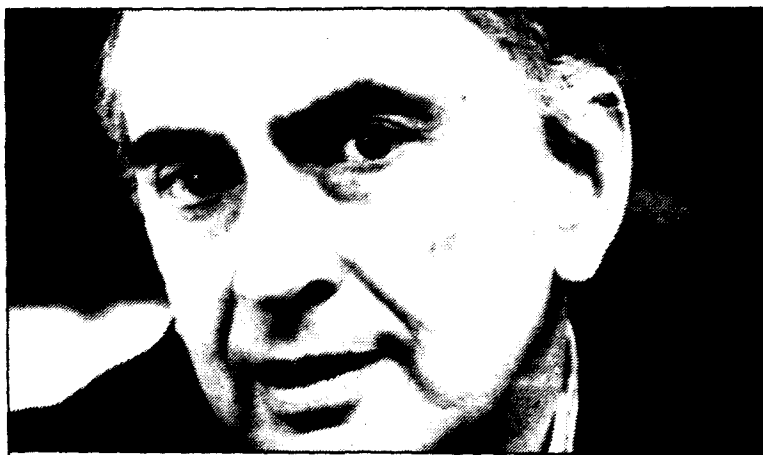
Another magnificent set piece: the last talk between John Hay and John G. Nicolay, secretaries to Abraham Lincoln. They had two names for Lincoln: *The Ancient* and *The Tycoon*. Hay asks Nicolay if he thinks Lincoln would approve of and further the Empire. Nicolay responds: "The Ancient, no. The Tycoon, yes." Later Hay reflects that "the people played no part at all in the government of the United States in Lincoln's time, and even less so in the days of Theodore Rex [Roosevelt]."

Oh, yes, Caroline Sanford gets her newspaper and makes it a success by aping Hearst in a fine liberal sophisticated way. As some have noted, Vidal does stretch the truth a bit about this matter. But there were women who started newspapers back in those days; and of course we all know about the *Washington Post*—righteousness in the name of *The Good Empire*.

Like Ollie North said: "I lied to you in good faith."

Empire. William Appleman Williams' most recent book is *Redefining the Past*, published by Oregon State University Press.

HISTORY



Master novelist Gore Vidal continues his biographical history of America.

Did you hear the one about jokes as a scholarly discipline?

Cracking Jokes: Studies of Sick Humor Cycles and Stereotypes

By Alan Dundes
Ten Speed, 198 pp., \$9.95

By Jim Naureckas

Q: Why do elephants paint their toenails red?

A: To hide in cherry trees.

YOU MAY HAVE HEARD THIS ONE before, one of many similar jokes that surfaced in the '60s. If you did, you probably didn't give it much thought. But Alan Dundes did.

Dundes is a professor of folklore at Berkeley, and jokes are his field. Like Jan Harold Brunvand, who collects modern folktales in books like *The Vanishing Hitchhiker*, Dundes writes down an oral tradition that we've all taken part in and lets us see it from the outside.

But where Brunvand is generally content to treat his "urban legends" as curiosities, Dundes tries to fit the jokes he records into a social context. Is this taking humor too seriously? Dundes writes that "no piece of folklore continues to be transmitted unless it means something—even if neither the speaker nor the audience can articulate what that meaning might be."

Dundes follows Freud's line that jokes are expressions of taboo feelings. But instead of examining the repressed desires of individuals, Dundes looks at joke cycles which he says reveal the hidden attitudes of a whole culture.

Both of them went down on the Challenger: Part of *Cracking Jokes* discusses the kinds of jokes that circulate after any event that makes people feel uneasy, like the jokes that followed the Challenger disaster or Leon Klinghoffer's mur-

der. Dundes takes these jokes to their ghoulish extreme by documenting the prevalence of Auschwitz jokes in present-day Germany.

Much of the book deals with ethnic jokes, pointedly noting the extent to which jokes teach stereotypes as well as reflect them, so that white children know the various stereotypes in many cases before they meet any members of minorities.

The purpose of jokes about traumatic events and ethnic stereotypes is fairly obvious. But why did people tell elephant jokes? The earlier riddle might seem like nonsense—if it's funny, it's because it doesn't mean anything. But the interesting thing for Dundes is that the elephant in the cherry tree is changing its color to fit in somewhere it doesn't belong.

Dundes maintains that elephant jokes weren't really about elephants at all, but about the civil rights movement. Elephants stood in for blacks not only because of the association with Africa—think of the Babar books—but also be-

cause of the phallic fantasies whites have about black men. Early jokes mostly dealt with the elephant's prodigious sexuality: "What's big and gray and comes in quarts? An elephant."

Later in the cycle, the elephant had feminine attributes (like painted toe-nails) or was the object of attack: "How do you kill a blue elephant? With a blue elephant gun. How do you kill a pink elephant? You grab it by the balls (or trunk) and squeeze like hell until it turns blue and then you kill it with a blue elephant gun."

Elephant jokes, according to Dundes, were a way for whites to express repressed fears about the civil rights movement—as the elephant with its phallic trunk is symbolically (or actually) castrated the threatening image of the militant black is dissipated. (Related jokes expressed white fears more openly: "What's dangerous, lives in trees and is black? A crow with a machine gun.")

Dundes finds similar explanations for other joke cycles becom-

ing popular at specific times—dead baby jokes emerging after abortion was legalized, light bulb jokes reflecting a sense of impotence (an inability to "screw in") stemming from the energy crisis. The Polish jokes of the '70s, like elephant jokes of the '60s, serve as a substitute for racial jokes, since "lower-class whites are not militant and do not constitute a threat to middle-class white America."

Although the readings Dundes gives of American jokes are seldom flattering, there is a fascination in seeing jokes one has heard and repeated held up for serious examination, however speculative some of his interpretations might seem. Popular culture has emerged as a legitimate subject for academic study. But often the concept of popular culture is confined to things that can be consumed, such as TV, movies and rock music, or limited to exotic subcultures like punk or hip-hop. Dundes' patient field work and insightful analysis brings to light an invisible art form that has all of us as authors.

IN THESE TIMES, AUG. 5-18, 1987 21

Press

Continued from page 7

prisoned on drug charges, gave detailed accounts of flying weapons down to Central America and returning with cocaine and marijuana provided by North network figures like Hull.

George Morales, another convicted drug runner, said that he had given \$3 million to the contras in return for U.S. government help with his pending criminal charges. *West 57th* confirmed, in an April 6, 1987, broadcast, that Morales had brought back \$400,000 in one trip from the Bahamas. Contra official Octaviano Cesar signed the U.S. Customs declaration.

In a July 11 report, *West 57th* presented the testimony of Ramon Milian-Rodriguez, a convicted narcotics financial expert, who told a Senate investigatory committee that he had helped the Colombian cocaine cartel

funnel \$10 million in donations to the contras, at the request of contra resupply overseer Felix Rodriguez.

A new link came from the *Milwaukee Journal's* David Umhoefer on July 8, reporting that a fugitive wanted on drug charges, Detlaf Thomas, told an undercover agent last December that 75 percent of his profits were going to the contras, according to the agent.

Based on the testimony of these and other witnesses, including mercenary Steve Carr who died mysteriously in Los Angeles last December, some journalists have alleged a direct U.S. government hand in setting up a drug network. Wrote Bernstein and Bielski in the May 1987 issue of *Spin*: "To avoid getting caught arming the contras during the congressional ban on such aid, the CIA turned to drug smugglers...who had their own planes and pilots with which to fly the weapons to the guerrillas. In exchange, the

CIA opened up hidden airstrips in northern Costa Rica as refueling stops for the smugglers."

Evidence supporting direct U.S. drug involvement has been uncovered by small newspapers for which contra drug running is a local story. For example, the *Miami News' Michael Carrier* reported on Oct. 30, 1986, that planes from Southern Air Transport—the airline that carried arms to Iran and the contras—had been seen being loaded with cocaine in Barranquilla, Colombia.

Unfit to print: Clearly the *New York Times* was wrong when it wrote on July 16 that charges claiming "the contras were involved in smuggling drugs...have not been verified by any other people" than Morales, Betzner and Tolliver, the three convicted smugglers who appeared in the April *West 57th* program. Indeed, a public State Department report acknowledges that several persons "having various kinds of affiliations with or

political sympathies for" the contras have been involved in drug smuggling. (The Reagan administration maintains such involvement is limited and does not involve contra leadership, a contention disputed by several journalistic reports.)

The State Department document, released July 24, 1986, and sent to members of Congress, reports that a Colombian drug trafficker gave Eden Pastora's contra group \$100,000 in 1984, as well as a cargo plane and two helicopters. Yet the *Times* still wrote on July 13 that news organizations have been unable to prove that "drugs were sold to buy weapons for the contras."

Hyper-caution has also led the *Washington Post* to misrepresent other people's research. Its July 22 headline about a press conference by Rep. Charles Rangel (D-NY) read, "Hill Panel Finds No Evidence Linking Contras to Drug Smuggling." But in fact Rangel said his committee had found no evidence tying contra leaders to drug smuggling—but did find, as is obvious to anyone investigating the subject, that some contras are cocaine smugglers. "Leaders not linked to contra drug smuggling," while a more accurate headline, would not have done as much to dampen a potentially explosive issue. (The worthiness of Rangel's investigation is a different story—see page 6.)

Even the *Miami Herald*, which won a well-deserved Pulitzer Prize this year for its Iran-contra coverage, has been uncharacteristically quiet on the contra-drug story. "We've devoted a lot of manpower to this story," a *Herald* editor told *In These Times*. "We haven't been able to prove it."

But one of the *Herald's* top reporters, Alfonso Chardy, had a different view of his newspaper's investigations. "I looked into it. We didn't do any stories," he said, adding, "that doesn't mean I didn't find anything."

Why have the major papers tried to squelch the drug story, even after some of the allegations have been officially confirmed? Some journalists suggested to *In These Times* that reports to date have not been well-sourced, although at least eight alleged contra drug participants have made public confessions. One reporter argued that the story has been covered so much that "people's eyes would glaze over because they got sick of it."

A more plausible explanation was offered by Keith Schneider, author of two of the *New York Times* pieces cited above. "This story can shatter a republic," he said. "I think it is so damaging, the implications are so extraordinary, that for us to run the story, it had better be based on the most solid evidence we can amass."

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<p>SCHOOL IS HELL AND DON'T YOU FORGET IT</p>			<p>LESSON 13: THE 9 TYPES OF HIGH SCHOOL TEACHERS</p>			<p>WHO, ME?</p>		
<p>THE KID GOSH, KIDS!!</p> <p>ALSO KNOWN AS: DUDE, SQUIRT, JUNIOR. BASIC MOODS: FRISKY, ENTHUSIASTIC. WARNING: CAN BE AS CRUEL AS A TEE-AGER.</p>			<p>THE PRIG NO LAUGHING PLEASE.</p> <p>ALSO KNOWN AS: OLD IRONIDES, PRUNEFACE. BASIC MOODS: HUMORLESS, IRRITATED. WARNING: WILL PENALIZE YOU FOR BINKING.</p>			<p>THE HIPSTER CAN'T YOU LITTLE SHEEP THINK FOR YOURSELVES?</p> <p>ALSO KNOWN AS: THE WEIRDO, THE POET. BASIC MOODS: AGITATED, NOSTALGIC. WARNING: WILL MAKE YOU FEEL BAD ABOUT THE PROM.</p>		
<p>THE FOSSIL Z</p> <p>ALSO KNOWN AS: THE CORPSE. BASIC MOODS: ORNERY, ASLEEP. WARNING: IT LIVES.</p>			<p>THE DIP OH BOY!! TODAY WE'VE GOT THREE FILMS!!</p> <p>ALSO KNOWN AS: EASY, THE BABYSITTER. BASIC MOODS: DIZZY, OPTIMISTIC. WARNING: MAKES YOUR BRAIN SLUGGISH.</p>			<p>THE JOCK THAT REMINDS ME OF LAST NIGHT'S GAME.</p> <p>ALSO KNOWN AS: BIG GUY, COACH, GRUNTY. BASIC MOODS: MANLY, LOUD, CORNY. WARNING: MAY OR MAYNO PUSH-UPS ON THE SPOT.</p>		
<p>THE WONDER NOW YOU GET IT!! YOU GUYS ARE SMART!! A'S FOR EVERYONE!!!</p> <p>ALSO KNOWN AS: THE MIRACLE. BASIC MOODS: INSPIRED, GABBY. WARNING: EXTREMELY RARE.</p>			<p>THE FANATIC NO EXCUSES. I DON'T CARE IF YOUR GRANDMA DIED.</p> <p>ALSO KNOWN AS: SCREAMY, SCREECHY. BASIC MOODS: BAD, WORSE. WARNING: NO WIN.</p>			<p>DER FUEHRER GOOD MORNING, MY TROUBLED LITTLE LOSERS. YOU ALL FAILED YESTERDAY'S TEST.</p> <p>ALSO KNOWN AS: PIG, CREEP, SCUM. BASIC MOODS: SARCASTIC, GLEEFUL. WARNING: THIS IS NOT A DREAM.</p>		

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By Joel Schechter

DESPITE THE ONGOING CONTRAGATE INVESTIGATION, there is at least one more big revelation to come: Ronald Reagan never fully abandoned his previous career as a professional entertainer. Over the past six and a half years he has been seen performing for nightclub audiences in San Francisco and Washington, D.C. His act opened this summer at the Ballroom, a club in Manhattan.

The White House staff will deny it and claim that some comedian named Jim Morris is impersonating the president. But Morris has told the press that Reagan is doing the comedian's job for him. Reagan has never stopped delivering anecdotes and one-liners; even in the hospital, wounded by an assassin's bullet, he told the nation: "I forgot to duck." As an impersonator of Reagan, Jim Morris frequently finds himself stealing lines from the president. "Can you believe I [Reagan] actually said that?" he asks in the middle of his nightclub act.

Some of his worst one-liners come directly from Reagan, and Morris has to suffer the consequences. "I haven't heard so many groans since I was in the intensive care unit of the Bethesda Naval Hospital," he said the night I saw his act in New York. Despite his excessive fondness for puns (hence the groans), Morris has won considerable praise this summer for "An Evening with the Pres-

ident." And, barring impeachment, he will probably be revising and performing the same show for the next 18 months.

Morris follows a succession of presidential mimics, most of whom have faded from public attention after their inspirations have left the White House. Every suspicion that the president is a liar, an impostor or a master of the "politics of image" has been confirmed on nightclub stages, by comedians who recreate themselves in the president's image: Vaughn Meader as Kennedy, Stacy Keach as Lyndon Johnson in *Macbird*, David Frye as Nixon. Before moving his new show to New York, Jim Morris was in Boston for several months, imitating Reagan in Garry Trudeau's cabaret revue, *Rap Master Ronnie* (the title song of which features the president as a rap singer).

Meet the Prez: Morris also formerly operated "Rent a Reagan," a service that allowed individuals and companies to lease the president's double for public appearances. Little did he know he was competing with the White House again: a contra fund raiser was offering donors a personal meeting with the commander in chief. Morris' current act gives citizens a chance not only to meet the president, but also to ask everything they want to know. His show thrives on the intense curiosity of those who want to know what Reagan knew, and when he forgot it, in the contragate scandal. The inquisitive need pay only a \$15 cover charge, or buy a

few drinks, to hear a man whose smooth, deep voice, highly mobile eyebrows and boyish pompadour are very much like the president's.

Morris' nightly press conferences democratize the presidency, in a sense, by making the man answerable to anyone who visits the nightclub. And in this instance, questioning is not restricted to a carefully screened press corps; many of these questions will never be heard from the press. There's a great interest in the chief executive's sex life, and his future as an actor. Morris' answer about Iran—"I ran in '80 and '84 and won, and that's all you have to know"—dismisses the topic quickly with a pun. Like his model in the White House, the comedian has rehearsed most of his answers in advance. In fact, he is generally better prepared than the other president—and funnier. The White House may want to hire this man as a stand-in—if it has not already secretly done so sometime in the past.

Morris' most satiric statements treat White House scandal as if it is part of a logical, official program. He says that as president he had to approve of contra drug smuggling because: "How can we have a successful 'Just Say No' campaign if we don't have any drugs imported?"

Throughout the evening, when not hesitating and stumbling through statements (or misstatements) as confidently as Ronald Reagan, Morris captures the president's

antic side: the leader who would be comedian. Who else but the president would ask how many White House advisers it takes to change a lightbulb, and then answer: "None, I prefer to remain in the dark."

His face is often bemused, as he is reminded of *another* anecdote, which he only half-completes because it reminds him of another anecdote. He warns his listeners that they better laugh, or America will fall behind the Soviets in its build-up of jokes. "You know what happens if you don't laugh...I'll bomb." Too often, however, these puns trivialize the evening's promise as political humor. No president could be so desperate for votes or laughter that he would announce, "I just flew in from Geneva and, boy, are my arms limited."

Morris excels in his vocal imitation of the president. He can say almost anything and sound authoritative (as can Reagan, most of the time) with carefully measured and sonorous intonation. At the conclusion of his presidential press conference, Jim Morris leaves the stage and returns to offer some other vocal impressions. Brief speeches feature the voices of George Bush, Ollie North, Dan Rather, Julia Child. And assuming one of them is elected president in 1988, Morris may outlast Ronald Reagan as a popular entertainer.

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